Short Stories.

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No. 706.) Week Ending July 12th, 1902. (Price One Penny.

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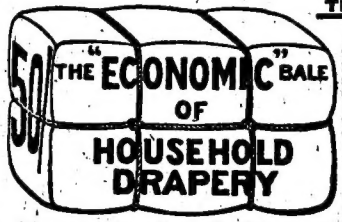

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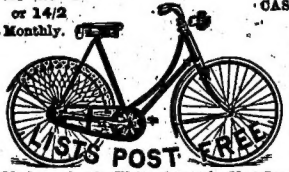

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Short Stories

No. 706.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending July 12th, 1902.

ANOTHER WOMAN'S CHILD.

A Powerful Story which Tells of Love's Revenge.

"I HATE her! I hate her! I hate her!"

The words rang out in accents of passionate anger, beneath which could be distinguished a note of intolerable pain.

The girl who uttered them leant back against the gnarled trunk of an old apple-tree, her face uplifted to the man who stood beside her, embarrassment visible in every jerky movement he made, every nervous word he spoke.

"I say, Joyce, I'm most awfully sorry, but—but don't talk like that. She——"

"She has stolen you from me—and I tell you I hate her—I hate her!" the girl turned on him fiercely. "You loved me once. You loved me till she won you away from me with her beauty and her wiles, and now my heart is broken—broken!"

And sinking into a little miserable heap upon the ground, the girl broke into a storm of tears.

Embarrassment and impatience were the prevailing expressions on the face of the man who stood awkwardly beside her—a man whose weakness of character was written plainly on his fair, undecided face.

"I'm awfully sorry, Joyce!" he began. "I'm awfully sorry—but——"

She sprang to her feet again with an exclamation of scorn.

"What good do you think it will do to say you are sorry? Sorry! You say you are 'sorry' if you break a cup. You can spare your sorrow now! Do you think you are likely to be happy with this beautiful cousin of whom you tell me, whom you have won over another woman's heart, and by trampling on another woman's love? Will you be happy with her, I wonder? Why did you make me love you if this was to be the end?"

The sun filtered through the blossom-laden apple-trees upon the girl's fair face. Her blue tear-filled eyes smote the man who watched her with a momentary compunction. It was but momentary. Another face rose before him—a face as brilliant in colouring as a gorgeous tropical flower—eyes, in whose bewitching glances he had forgotten loyalty, truth, honour—a bewildering smile whose fascination had made his brain whirl with strange, new sensations, never aroused by his calmer, and better love for Joyce. The comparison in his mind between his beautiful, queenly cousin, Hilda, and the girl who stood before him now, drove from his heart that momentary compunction.

"After all," he reflected, "Joyce and I would never have been really happy together. A man cannot commit a greater folly than to marry out of his own station in life, and I should have done that if I had married Joyce. Poor little girl! She will soon forget me, and marry someone more suited to her, who will make her far happier than I could have done. I could not give Hilda up now. It is all for the best!"

So argued the weak, easy-going Aleck Baynes, the man whom Hilda Baynes, his beautiful cousin, had fascinated, as easily as a snake fascinates a bird.

"Joyce," he began again, touching her arm, "I cannot tell you—I cannot ever tell you how terribly sorry I am for having hurt you! I know I have been a brute, but I could not marry you now that I—that I——"

"Now that you love someone else better," she retorted scornfully; "now that this fine cousin you tell me about has taken you away. Where did you find this wonderful cousin you had not met before?"

"I met her at the house of a mutual relation," he replied, cautiously refraining from mentioning the locality in which Hilda lived.

"And she is very beautiful?"

"Beautiful?"—a little rapt look came into the young man's eyes—"she—she—I never saw anyone like her. She is wonderful—and she loves me—and——"

He broke off, with a sudden remembrance of who his listener was.

"Thanks!" she said sarcastically. "I don't care to hear your raptures about your new love. You had better make haste to say good-bye to your old one! Why did you ask me to meet you here—in the old place where we have been so happy? It was like an insult to ask me *here*—to this orchard. It hurts—ah! it hurts! Why did you make me come?"

"I wanted us to part good friends," he said weakly. "I could not bear to feel you were angry with me, Joyce."

"Good friends!" she exclaimed indignantly; "good friends! You and I can never be friends again. You cannot throw a woman's heart away as you would an old shoe! When are you to marry your cousin?" she asked abruptly. "Is it to be a grand affair?"

A dull flush mounted to Aleck Baynes' forehead, he stirred uneasily.

"Don't be so bitter, Joyce—Joyce, dear!" he stammered; "it—we, I mean the wedding, will not be grand at all. It is to be a—a secret marriage!"

"A secret marriage?" As the girl repeated his words, a gleam shot into her eyes, rightly interpreted by Aleck. He seized her arm.

"Joyce!" he cried, "do not take your revenge for the wrong I have done you by making our marriage known. I beseech you help us to keep it a secret. It is bitterly opposed by Hilda's people and mine. For the present it is imperative that it should be a dead secret. Joyce, for the sake of all

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that has come and gone between us, be good to me and keep my secret!"

His passionate, pleading voice died into silence. For a moment Joyce's face was set in lines of sullen resolve, then a gentler emotion swept them away.

"I can't refuse you," she said brokenly; "I never could. I will keep your secret, Aleck. I will not tell of your marriage, or injure you—and I hope—oh, I hope you may be happy!"

Then, with one long last look into the face of the man she loved, Joyce turned from him and walked away across the orchard, under the blossoming trees. She looked back at him once, but his eyes were fixed on the ground—he did not see her.

"Good-bye, Aleck, my darling!" she whispered; "good-bye, good-bye! I do not blame *you* so much. It is she that I hate—hate—hate. She has stolen you from me, and I hate her! Ah, if only I could punish her for what she has done, how gladly would I do it—how gladly!"

Thus the first seed of revengeful longing was sown in Joyce's heart, a seed destined some day to spring into a full grown tree.

* * * * *

Fate plays strange pranks sometimes. It played into Joyce's hands a year later.

The girl married shortly after Aleck's desertion of her—married a good man who had wooed her for years, and loved her steadfastly, and though she told him sorrowfully she had no heart to give him, he persuaded her to become his wife, and to let him try to comfort her. He and Joyce established themselves in a small house in London, and took in lodgers, and though it would be untrue to say that Joyce was happy, she worked loyally for and with her husband, and made him a good and faithful wife. But she never forgot the man she loved—and she never forgave the woman who had stolen him from her.

Just a year after her bitter parting with Aleck Baynes, there came to Joyce's house a woman who asked for rooms. She was singularly beautiful, and she told Joyce that she had lately lost her husband, and needed shelter for herself and for her unborn child. Joyce's heart went out to her, and she was even inclined to refuse the liberal prepayment which the stranger insisted upon bestowing upon her. Without further inquiries she agreed to help this lady in her trouble, and the best rooms were at once prepared for her.

Only after the beautiful stranger was installed did Joyce learn her name. Only after she had promised to succour and care for her did it become known to her that the woman under her roof was none other than the woman who had stolen her lover from her, but whom hitherto she had never seen—Hilda Baynes—now a widow and desolate! For one wild moment Joyce allowed her visions of revenge to run rampant in her mind. She would turn this creature out—she would——

But gentler thoughts followed, brought to her perhaps by the twining touch of her own baby's fingers—her month old baby, who had come to soften Joyce's heart. "No, no," she reflected, "I cannot take vengeance upon a woman, ill and in sore trouble. No, I will help Aleck's widow in this time of her sorest need, and if at some time revenge is put into my hands—it must not be yet."

So it came about that through the weeks that followed Hilda Baynes was totally unaware of the identity of the woman who tended her, never dreaming that her landlady—Joyce Carnegie—was the girl vaguely mentioned to her by Aleck, the girl from whom she herself had stolen him.

Perhaps Hilda was too utterly selfish to observe that Joyce's care of her was bestowed as a duty; she was so entirely self-absorbed that nothing outside her own immediate range of vision ever did impress her.

When her baby was born she showed neither love for it, nor interest in it.

"Take it away," she cried fretfully. "What can I do with a baby? Take it away!" Then she turned her face to the wall and railed against Fate, planning desperately how to circumvent this latest blow of fortune.

"A child!" she thought bitterly. "What shall I do now? My marriage has been successfully hidden; no one need ever have known it. I had not to change my name in marrying Aleck—the secret could have gone with me to my grave. But this wretched child has spoilt it all!" No spark of mother's love burnt in Hilda Baynes' bosom; no kindly thought of her helpless little one stirred within her; her own interests, her own ambition were all for which she cared.

The secret marriage had turned out a miserable failure; mutual reproaches and recriminations between the young couple had ended in an almost total rupture, and Aleck's death had been simply untold relief to his wife. Now at last she felt she would be able to attain the ambition which her temporary passion for her cousin had made her forget. She relegated her brief married life to the realms of nightmare, and indulged in blissful dreams of social triumphs and worldly delights such as her soul hankered after. With her great beauty she would make a great marriage, she thought, love might be set aside for ever, and ambition would be her god in his place.

And now the cup was dashed from her lips. This baby had spoilt everything. No man would wish to marry a woman who had previously contracted a secret marriage, and was burdened with a child. The man upon whom her ambitious soul was set was above all a man of honour and uprightness, who would despise her for her conduct, and turn his back upon her if he learnt of what had happened.

She clutched at the bedclothes in a paroxysm as her thoughts reached this point, and then all at once a smile hovered round her lips.

"I have it!" she whispered, "I have it! I believe it could be worked. I shall surely be able to carry it out successfully, and if so I shall be free—free—free!"

After this Joyce noticed how changed was Hilda's demeanour to her child. She seemed interested in it, even fond of it, and Joyce began to think that she had misjudged her rival.

The seed of revengeful longing in her heart came near to dying just then. Feeling she had misjudged Hilda the widow, she began to wonder whether she had perhaps misjudged Hilda the girl; but the seed of revenge lay dormant only for a while; it was to revive presently in its full strength.

Hilda recovered rapidly, and on a sunny May afternoon she summoned Joyce to her sitting-room, and said in her most charming accents:

"Mrs. Carnegie, you have been so good to me, that I have planned a tiny pleasure for you this afternoon. I want you and your husband to go to the theatre. I have taken seats for you, and you must really spare the time to go, I will take care of baby."

Much surprised, Joyce expressed the gratitude she felt, and early in the afternoon she and her husband started in the cab also provided by Mrs. Baynes, leaving the latter upon her sitting-room sofa, the baby's cradle beside her. But no sooner had the Carnegie's cab rolled away than Hilda leapt from the sofa, locked the door, and began with feverish haste to tear off the black garments she wore, replacing them by coloured clothes she drew from a box in the adjoining bedroom. She next proceeded to ransack cupboards, empty drawers, and to jam their contents pell mell into a large trunk, stopping now and again to laugh triumphantly.

"Thank Heaven, I gave her no address when I came to her," she said; "she will never be able to trace me. How could she do so? My name is common enough. When I marry again I shall insist upon a very quiet wedding. Joyce Carnegie will never discover me again—of that I shall make

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very sure!" Laughing still, she rammed the last remaining articles into her box, and banged down the lid resentfully.

"Thank Heaven. I have found a way of escape!" she cried. Her next action was to go into the sitting-room and look down at the sleeping babe, but there was no love on her beautiful face.

"I have found a means of disposing of you," she said; "you will be very happy as the Carnegie's child—you would be miserable as mine! You will be a companion for their own child—if you live, that is to say, and the doctor says you are very delicate!"

She then wrote a hurried note, after which she rang the bell for the maid of all work.

"I have a fearful toothache," she said, "Go to Holden, my chemist, and ask for some toothache tincture for me."

The girl hesitated, looking at her open-mouthed.

"Please ma'am, I can't leave the 'ouse," she said. "'Olden's a long ways off, and there's missus' baby and all."

"Do as I tell you," Hilda answered, "I am here, the house will come to no harm. Go at once!"

The girl fled incontinently, and as soon as Hilda had seen her out of sight down the street, she flung on a hat and cloak, and rushed to the front door to summon a cab.

Her beauty and her imperiousness paralysed the cabman into doing exactly what she wished, although as he told his wife later on, he had many misgivings as to her strange conduct in leaving a house apparently deserted, save for a sleeping baby in the cradle upstairs and another baby crying in the kitchen.

But in spite of his misgivings he fetched down her box, meekly remounted his cab and drove Hilda to Paddington—a handsome girl dressed in a dark red gown and a hat of roses to match it—a being as unlike as could well be imagined to the woman in sweeping black draperies who six weeks before had entered Joyce Carnegie's house.

Arrived at Paddington she ordered the porter in the cabman's hearing to label her box to Cheltenham, but when the cabby had departed she calmly told the man that she had made a mistake, and for Cheltenham substituted the name of a remote station in Devonshire.

Late that afternoon Joyce and her husband reached home. The front door was flung open by the little slavey who greeted them with a storm of words out of which only two were comprehensible.

"She've gone—she've gone!"

"Who has gone?" cried Mrs. Carnegie.

"She've gone and left the baby. Oh the wicked woman! Send me out she did and back I come to find both the blessed babies screaming their little 'earts out."

Trembling in every limb and with a face as white as death, Joyce flew upstairs to the sitting-room lately occupied by Hilda and now a scene of desolation. Drawers were pulled out and empty, the cupboard was empty too, a litter of paper strewed the floor and table, and on the bed next door lay an untidy heap of the black garments lately worn by Mrs. Baynes.

The baby was once more asleep, and by its side lay a note addressed to Joyce, which she hastily tore open and read. It was very short.

"I am leaving hurriedly. You have often expressed such fondness for children that I leave my child to your tender mercies. Bring her up with yours if she lives—which I doubt her doing—I was never intended to be a mother.—H.B."

With the letter was a five-pound note and that was all!

Joyce uttered a little cry, then with a gesture of inexpressible anger she tore the letter into tiny fragments and stamped upon them.

"Baffled" she cried, "baffled! But I will find her. I will find her if I have to track her till the day of doom. She stole the man I loved. She has deserted her child and left it to my 'tender mercies!' Tender mercies indeed! If it were not Aleck's child as well as hers I would send it to the workhouse—but—but—" and kneeling beside the cradle Joyce broke into a passion of weeping.

Then she rose suddenly to her feet.

"Hilda Baynes" she said aloud and solemnly "I will seek you—seek you till my dying day. You shall pay for all that you have done and I will be avenged. You shall not escape scot free. I will have my revenge!"

Hilda had vanished into the great wilderness of London and left no clue but the seed of revengeful longing grew and flourished in Joyce's heart till it became a great tree—a tree destined to bear bitter and terrible fruit.

* * * * *

Lady Trevor—the most beautiful woman in London—stood in the midst of her great drawing-room giving directions to an army of workmen anent the ball which that night was to make her more than ever famous. She had vowed that her ball should eclipse every function of the kind hitherto held, and what Lady Trevor vowed she was generally capable of fulfilling, she made all things about her bow to her imperious will. Rich, handsome, adored by her husband and flattered by an admiring circle of friends, she might well feel that the world was at her feet, and she had determined that to-night, the world for whose approving voice she cared more for than anything else in the universe—should stand speechless with admiration and amazement.

There were to be acres of flowers in her spacious rooms—fairy lamps were to glow by thousands in every corner of the stately mansion which called her mistress, the supper was to include every out of season delicacy that imagination could devise—no expense was to be spared to make the occasion something to be dreamt of and talked of for weeks to come.

Hilda Trevor had attained to the first of her ambitions when Sir Alfred made her his wife. The handsome, self-willed girl had vowed that she would marry wealth and birth, and she had done both; and though, heartless and cold herself, she had not even the fraction of a heart to bestow upon the distinguished man who married her, he blindly worshipped the very ground upon which his wife's feet trod, and bestowed upon her a passionate and adoring love.

She was very beautiful.

Tall, graceful, stately, she moved across her great room like some Eastern Queen of old, in her dark, wonderful beauty. Her eyes were black as night, and glowing with the excitement of anticipations as she pictured her triumph of the night. Her raven locks framed a face over which artists raved, so exquisite were its outlines, so rich and glowing the colouring of her marvellous complexion. She turned to her husband with a smile.

"A bank of roses, there, Alfred, will make this room complete," she said.

"What you like, dear," he answered cheerfully, "choose everything you think best, I trust entirely to your taste."

She was turning from him to give the necessary order to a respectful foreman who stood at her right hand, when a footman crossed the room, bearing upon a salver a note which he handed to his mistress. A look of surprise crossed her face as she took up the envelope. It was dirty, untidy, and crumpled, singularly unlike any communications this spoilt child of fortune was in the habit of receiving.

"What a nasty document!" she exclaimed, opening the envelope with a distasteful glance, "some begging letter, I suppose."

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"Let me look at it for you," said her husband, but even as he spoke the colour faded from his wife's face, the eyes she had fixed upon the letter in her hand grew strained and fixed, she swayed where she stood and would have fallen but for Sir Alfred's supporting arm.

"What is it, dear?" he cried, "has that note——"

With a violent effort she recovered her self-control, and drew herself away from his arm. The semblance of a smile trembled across her deathly white face, she crumpled the letter in her hand, and said quietly, though in a voice that shook.

"Oh, my dear Alfred, no. The note is merely a line—from a poor woman I am employing. I—I think I must be a little tired, the heat has upset me I expect. I felt quite faint for a minute. I will go and rest."

Her husband's face was still full of anxiety, tenderly giving her his arm he led her upstairs to her luxurious bedroom, brought her salts and eau de Cologne, and only left her at last when she declared that she felt really better, and would lie down on her sofa, and try to get a little sleep. But no sooner had Sir Alfred's steps died away in the passage than she sprang from the couch, hastily turned the key in the lock, and began pacing the room like a caged beast, clenching and unclenching her hands in ungovernable passion.

"How has she found me out? How has that woman found me out?" she cried aloud. "I thought I was safe from her for ever. How has she discovered me, and what must I do?"

That was the sum and substance of all her musings—what must she do? What *could* she do now that Joyce Carnegie had discovered her whereabouts and her identity with the Hilda Baynes of a year before? Would her secret be known to Sir Alfred and the world? This was the dread question which rioted to and fro in her brain. She unfolded the note that was still crumpled in her hand.

"You must come to me, or I will come to you"—so it ran. It was signed "Joyce Carnegie," and an address followed.

"At all costs I must prevent her from coming here," Hilda reflected, "at all costs that must be stopped. Good God! I thought I was safe from her for ever!"

With desperate haste she tore from her wardrobe a long, fur-trimmed cloak which covered her from head to foot, and hid the scarlet folds of her gown. She pinned on a large hat covered with ostrich feathers, and then, opening the door cautiously, she stole out into the passage and down the stairs. As she passed the drawing-room door she heard her husband's voice giving orders to the workmen, and, still unseen, she went on across the hall and out of the front door.

For half a second she stood irresolute on the pavement outside, then she hailed a passing hansom, and giving the man the address which already seemed to be burnt into her brain in letters of fire, she was whirled away Eastwards.

But in her haste and desperation she had overlooked one thing. That crumpled note which had wrought such havoc in her mind, lay white and prominent upon the carpet in her bedroom, where, in her feverish pacing she had dropped it. There, half an hour later, her husband found it when he stood gazing blankly round his wife's empty room. Mechanically he unfolded the soiled sheet and read the note—read it over and over again, his eyes wide with dismay. Then he tore it into a thousand fragments.

"What in the wide world does it mean?" he cried. "What can it mean, and who is Joyce Carnegie?"

[*The conclusion of this story (describing the incident shown on the cover) will appear in next Tuesday's Short Stories.*]

THE DOCTOR'S MOTOR.

And How It Played the Part of Matchmaker.

"I SHALL go to South Africa," he said, gloomily.

She made a little gesture of vexation. She drummed on the carpet with a pair of small, strong heels.

"For goodness' sake," she cried, petulantly, "try to do something less hackneyed. Nowadays every man who thinks he likes a woman who doesn't happen to be prepared to marry him at a moment's notice, goes off to South Africa."

He turned upon her sturdily.

"Indeed! If you imagine I'm going there heart-broken you're mistaken. I'm going there to make my fortune. I shall take that post Levy offered me on his ranch. I shall combine it with doctoring, and between the two I might make money."

She had turned toward him with rather a serious expression.

"Really?" she said, slowly.

"Really," he said, emphatically.

She did not look so confident as she had looked some minutes earlier. There was a little whitening of her cheeks. He was a fine-looking, well-set-up young man, for whom any woman might have cared. But he had committed that most foolish of love's many blunders; he had proposed to a woman without having given her time to know whether she cared for him or not. The wise man defers his proposal until the woman has begun to tremble lest it shall not come. In life we value most the things we think or have thought ourselves in danger of losing. Impetuous of disposition, he had fallen in love with her at first sight. She was of calmer temper; but although she was not prepared to accept him in a moment, neither was she prepared to lose him in a moment. This notion of South Africa affected her more than she was able to explain to herself.

"To make a fortune is a very poor ambition for a young man," she said, loftily.

"Possibly," he agreed, "but the fortune made is a very comfortable condition for an old one."

"How clever you are," she said, with a rallying smile.

But he did not rally.

"You'd far better remain here," she resumed, glancing sidelong at his rueful countenance. "You're getting on well in your profession. Since you set up people seem to have fallen ill just for the sake of adding to your practice. In old Dr. Jarvis's time nobody was ill. Now it seems as though the lease of everybody's constitution had suddenly fallen in."

"Oh I'm doing well enough," he said, dejectedly. She was so serious and yet so gay, so prudent and so charming. Her blue eyes showed sincere, yet full of humour. The red lips from which her wisdoms fell seemed made for kisses. Her curls were such a charming golden frame for common sense. Yet where was the use of his doing well, or of her lips and

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curls, if these were to fall to the lot of some luckier man? He could not bear to think of it. He stifled a groan and took up his hat. She stood there in her fresh print frock. She wore a charming apron, with lace frills and pockets. She was a delightful young farmer. When her father died, some two years earlier, she had taken up his work, and was doing it successfully. Her butter, the making of which she personally superintended, had a fame for miles round. He had been called in this morning to see an ailing dairymaid. Having prescribed for the dairymaid, he had proposed to the mistress.

The scene had been enacted in the pretty parlour of the old farm house. Through the opened windows came the perfume of roses and syringa, and a tangle of sweet lilies. Bees hummed, birds twittered and sung. Life was a poem. He stifled a groan, and taking up his hat moved some paces toward the long French window.

"At all events, you will not be leaving us just yet," she said, a trifle persuasively.

"Not till next month," he responded gravely, and with the air of a man who has made his final plans. He was guilty of a second of love's blunders. "No" to him spelled nothing but "No!"

"Next month?" she cried, dismayed. "Oh, what madness it is to let another person so affect your life."

"It might have been the sweetest madness in the world," he said, ardently.

She stirred restlessly. She fanned herself with her big sun hat. There was a fire in the air that seemed to burn her cheeks. But she would not be serious. She dared not be serious until she should be left alone to think.

"Your lovely new motor-car?" she challenged him. "You cannot take it to South Africa, and you will never have the heart to leave it."

From where they stood they could see it at rest before the opened gate. It sparkled in the sunshine. It was clean and smart of line, and cosily cushioned.

"I had it built for two," he said, and added, "I was a presumptuous ass."

He bowed his good-byes and escaped across the daisied lawn. She flung herself into a chair and started weeping.

* * * * *

He had made his rounds and, returning, fell into a bitter reverie. Now, although a motor car is as safe as any other form of locomotion, it is as well when driving one to keep the hand and mind upon the steering wheel.

Dyson, since the morning's disappointment, having had the subject next his heart, he elbowed aside, perforce, such mere commonplaces as a baby's teething, a schoolboy's measles, or a mother's indigestion, flung physic to the dogs and allowed himself a violent reaction. Knowing the straight clear road of some two miles before him, he dropped his head absently upon his chest, and in the dusk and silence of the scented woods through which his way ran, groaned out his desolation.

He would get away from it post-haste. He had made up his mind to that.

Every well-remembered signpost, every rustic homestead, every spot of beauty turned him sick. Yesterday he had seen these glorified by hope; now that he was hopeless they were sword thrusts at his heart.

Jack, his younger brother, who had just qualified, and was looking for a post, should take his practice at once, leaving him leisure to pack his traps and be off in a fortnight to Johannesburg. The fresh surroundings, the new, rough life, would give him something to think about besides golden hair, blue eyes, and the dearest, sweetest, gayest spirit in the world.

He looked up for a moment. There was a hedge which marked the furthest limit of her small estate. Yesterday, at sight of it he had broken into whistling. To-day—! He choked. A mist swam before his eyes. Two minutes later he pulled himself together. His road branched at an angle from the straight broad highway he had been following in a dream. His hand gripped the steering wheel, his eye marked hawthorns overhanging the corner of the lane down which he must turn; but his mind was in a certain room in the pretty, well-beloved farmhouse to the right of him.

Just as he turned into the lane, with wandering, dejected wits, a woman picking blackberries from the hedge, a baby hanging on her arm, suddenly shrieked and stood still, panic-stricken in the middle of the road.

Either he must run her down or he must ride into a bank. He chose the bank. He swung round his steering wheel, shut off the engines, and prepared for—anything.

Dorothy Lentham, musing in her garden, heard the well-known "Teuf-Teuf," guiltily blushed, and wondered how she would be able, without undue injury to her pride, to dissuade him from wrecking his future in South Africa.

Then came a sudden scream, a masculine exclamation—a thud—a crash and rattle, then—silence.

Hatless, breathless, blanched of face, she ran down the garden and out through a rustic gateway into the road.

The gaily-painted car stood on its hind wheels apparently uninjured, its front wheels raised and embedded in a grassy bank. Dyson, who had been thrown violently out, lay senseless in the road. The woman wrung her hands and wept above the scene. The baby howled and slapped its mother's face.

* * * * *

He came to his senses with the touch of a light hand on his brows. He opened heavy eyes and peered about a darkened room.

"John," he demanded of his dispenser, "what the deuce is up?"

But John was not there. He thought he must be dreaming still when the voice which had haunted him sweetly and mercilessly for many a week besought him to be quiet.

"You had an accident," she told him, with the sound of tears in her voice.

"Ah!" he said, and remembered. What a confounded nuisance! After all, he would not be able to get away as soon as he had hoped. Dazed as he was, that necessity to escape from the scene of his misery possessed him.

"Any bones broken?" he murmured.

"No," she said; "only brain concussion. But you must keep perfectly, perfectly still, Dr. Edwards says."

After a minute:

"Miss Lentham," he said, feebly—he was conscious of being able, had he wished, to speak more strongly, but the words sounded better uttered feebly—"would you mind just kissing me once—in case I should—should die, you know?"

There was a pause, which seemed to him an age.

Then he felt the red lips softly and rather timidly on his. Concussion seemed to have shaken discrimination into him.

"Good heavens!" he cried, in a wonder of amazement, "do you——I say, Miss Lentham, after all, do you——by Jove, I think, after all, I'll get well!"

"But you won't go to South Africa?" she wailed

"Not if I know it!" cried he.

The motor-car was so little injured—having safely and softly embedded itself—that not three months later, it took the couple for whom it had been built honeymooning, all over Wales.

ARABELLA KENEALY.

A Hate Match.

MISS SMILAX: "And so Miss Passe and Mr. Gotnix really got married. Was it a love match?" Mary: "On the contrary, I should call it a hate match." Miss Smilax: "Why? I don't understand you." Mary: "Why, she hated to be an old maid, and he hated to be poor."

To Keep them Humble.

FRIEND: "One of your clerks tells me you raised his salary and told him to get married, under penalty of discharge." Business Man: "Yes, I do that to all my clerks when they get old enough to marry. I don't want any of your independent, conceited men about my place."

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THE LORD OF THE EAGLES

By VICTOR PITT-KETHLEY.

PHILIP DRAKE was an artist, and he had come to the out-of-the world Spanish Pyrenean village of Turgiana in search of unhackneyed subjects. He had not been disappointed. Savage-looking, but eminently picturesque muleteers and their gaily-caparisoned beasts; the curious peasant types who frequented the little *venta* * at which he was staying (and where he made shift to exist on a menu composed largely of omelettes, washed down by fiery mountain wine); the shepherds; the dirty, but surpassingly beautiful children—these, set in a background of wild and rugged mountain, and moving in an atmosphere far removed from that of the bustling English city whence he had come, provided Philip with endless studies. And as the weeks glided on the handsome foreign *señor* became known to everybody in the village, while all—especially the privileged ones who had sat to him—agreed that no such painter had ever been heard of. An opinion in which the *padre*, whose heart the young artist had won by various acts of kindness, fully joined.

For his excursions into the mountains Philip engaged the services of a young man from the village, one Pepe Nerito, who soon began to conceive a dog-like affection for the tall young Englishman. One day, when they had penetrated into a wild and rocky valley, where, amid a setting of savage rocks and beetling precipices an impetuous mountain torrent dashed over a cliff in a cascade of milk-white foam, Philip noticed, on an eminence above him, a curious looking building, half castle and half dwelling-house. An indescribable air of desolation and decay seemed to brood over this strange habitation, set like an eyrie on its precipitous crag, and now bathed in a flood of blood-red light as the last rays of the setting sun fell upon it.

"Who lives in yonder house?" asked Drake, curiously.

Pepe glanced over his shoulder at the castle, and then crossed himself hastily.

"May the saints preserve us, *señor!*" he replied uneasily. "That is the Castle on the Rock. Old Don Andrea the witch-man liveth there, the Lord of the Eagles."

"Don Andrea the witch-man!" repeated Drake. "Who on earth is he?"

Pepe glanced once more at the grim building on the hill, now gradually fading into the evening mists. Then he spoke.

"I call him witch-man, *señor*," he explained, "because they say that he is not as other men—that he possesses the evil eye, and that he can cast spells upon his enemies. Once, years ago—my father told me the story—Don Andrea passed through the village, and the children mocked him and threw stones at him. He cursed them and their parents, telling them that a great evil should overtake them. That very week a strange sickness seized the flocks on the mountains, and ruin fell upon many in Turgiana. But that was not all. When the hot wind came out of the south a fever broke out in the village, and the first to die of it were the little ones who had mocked old Don Andrea. Since that day he has never been seen in Turgiana, but some of the muleteers have seen his daughter at different times, roaming alone over the hill-sides. She, they say, is fair as the lily, but the Don keepeth her away from all mankind."

"This is very interesting," said Philip, who was too well acquainted with the Spanish temperament to cast doubts on his guide's superstitious gabblings; "but why do you call this old hermit 'Lord of the Eagles'?"

"It is soon said, *señor*," replied Pepe. "Look at his castle and tell me what you see."

"I can see birds hovering round it," said Philip, after a pause; "small, black birds."

"They look small from here," said Pepe, "but were you nearer, *señor*, you would see that they are eagles—the great black eagles of the Sierras, cruel and terrible birds. And we call Don Andrea Lord of the Eagles because they come and go at his call—even eat out of his hand, so the people say. Were it not for the eagles, excellency, it might well have happened that the men had burnt his house over his head when the flocks have sickened through his spells. But he needeth no watch-dogs while he hath his eagles. Sometimes they swoop down upon the village, and steal sleeping babes from their cots, or fly at little children. The people tell tales of men who, in their cups, have gone up the mountain to beard the Don in his den. But none have ever returned—save only one, and he came back sightless, and an idiot!" He shuddered as he finished speaking.

On the way back to the village Philip thought over the wild and fantastic story his simple guide had unfolded to him. He was of a somewhat romantic temperament, and he was charmed to find this fragment of blind superstition lingering in the mountains. He determined, if possible, to find out more about the mysterious occupant of the Castle on the Rock. To this end he called on the old *padre*, the most intelligent person in the little community.

The priest was by this time quite an intimate friend of the young Englishman's. He had been first attracted to him by the fact that the latter was a Roman Catholic, and the bond of interest thus established had been strengthened by the kindly act of the young artist in executing a masterly copy of the old man's treasured Madonna, which hung in the village church. He received Drake with great heartiness.

When Philip mentioned his conversation with Pepe relative

* Wayside inn.

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to the strange inhabitant of the Castle on the Rock, however, the old *padre's* gentle face clouded.

"There are indeed strange tales about concerning Don Andrea," he said. "May the saints grant that they be not all true! What I know of him is not much, *señor*. He is the last of his race, the Almanzas of Navarra, and the Castle of the Rock and the mountain on which it stands are all that remains of their ancient estates. Many years ago he brought to that desolate house a young bride—if my memory serves me, a compatriot of your own. He treated her harshly, so it was said, and the tender northern flower faded away until she died, after giving birth to a little girl. Her death, I suppose, soured him, although he was always of a saturnine disposition. From that day to this, *señor*, he has held no communion with his fellows. The daughter has grown up as beautiful as her mother—and that is saying much. I have not set eyes on her since her childhood, but her mother I remember well."

"But what is all this wild talk about Don Andrea bewitching the village, and possessing powers over the eagles?" asked Drake.

The old priest stirred in his chair. "There is much talk on that subject, my son," he said; "but you and I know that by the goodness of Heaven such things as the evil eye cannot exist. As to the eagles, however, there can be no doubt that Don Andrea *does* possess some strange influence over them. Often do we see them circling over the Castle on the Rock, and when foolhardy men, drunk with wine, have gone forth, as they said, to bait the old man, they have been attacked by the eagles and killed or disfigured. Know you old Beppo, the blind beggar?"

"A half-witted man with scars on his face?" asked Drake.

"That is he," replied the priest. "Three years ago he was a muleteer, upright and strong, and possessed of his sight. Two of his mules died of a mysterious sickness, and he would have it that Don Andrea had cast his eye upon them. So the misguided man set forth to punish the old Don. Late at night some people on the outskirts of Turgiana were aroused by wild screams, and on going out, they found Beppo lying on the ground frightfully torn and disfigured, and covered with blood. Both his eyesight and his reason were totally gone."

"And was this done by the eagles?" asked Drake incredulously.

"Even so," said the priest gravely. "In his moments of sanity the poor wretch sometimes babbles of his terrible adventure of that night, and one gathers from his story that it was Don Andrea who set the eagles at him, as we might a watch-dog on a robber. Curiously enough, the crest of the Almanzas is a mountain eagle."

Drake was keenly interested in the curious story he had heard, and he secretly resolved to try and find out something for himself about Don Andrea and his daughter. Particularly was he interested in the beautiful girl—the daughter of an English mother—and he pictured to himself how unutterably lonely her life must be, cut off as she was from the society of her sisters in the outside world, and doomed to spend her young life in the company of an old madman—for such Drake judged Don Andrea to be.

In pursuit of his intention, he went day after day to the grim valley underneath the rock on which the castle of the Almanzas stood. Ostensibly he was there to paint the cascade, but more often than not, over a meditative pipe, he would watch the grim old building above for half an hour at a time. The only signs of life he saw about the place, however, were an occasional thread of smoke and the circling of the eagles, which certainly seemed to make their home somewhere in the recesses of the castle.

Since Drake had taken to visiting the valley, Pepe had been requisitioned by his father to aid in some building operations, so that the artist had the place to himself; for even had there been any pasture in this forbidding place it is doubtful whether the superstitious shepherds would have brought their flocks thither, so afraid were they of the evil eye of the Lord of the Eagles.

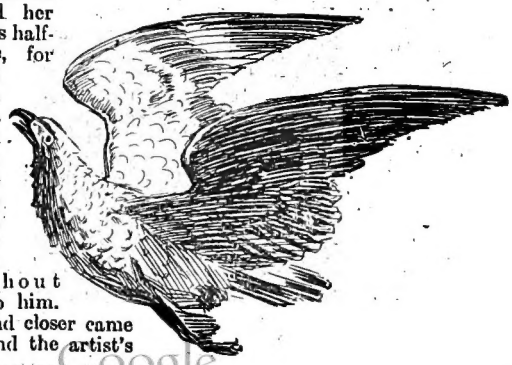
It came about one day that Philip set eyes, for the first time, on Don Andrea's daughter. Coming suddenly round a corner on the way to his painting-spot, he was startled to see a slight, girlish figure sitting on a rock. He had a momentary glimpse of a beautiful face, browned by exposure to the sun, and yet fairer in complexion than the average run of Spanish girls, and then the girl fled, like a frightened fawn, up the crags, skipping from rock to rock with the agility of a chamois. Drake felt certain that this shy maid of the mountains could be none other than Don Andrea's daughter, and he chuckled to himself at the idea that a creature so fair could possess the evil eye.

On the following day, as he sat at work, his thoughts every now and again straying to the fair apparition of the previous morning, he suddenly got it into his head that he was being watched. He scanned the rugged precipices around him, but saw nothing; he strained his ears for sounds, but all that came to him was the dull roar of the cascade. Nevertheless, he had an uneasy feeling that someone was near him, and although he feigned to be absorbed in his work, he kept on the alert. Once, hearing a slight sound, he turned his eyes cautiously in the direction whence it emanated, and fancied that he saw the girl's face for an instant behind a rock, but so quickly was it withdrawn, that he could not make certain his eyes were not deceiving him.

And then he thought of a plan whereby he hoped to make the watcher, if it were indeed the Don's daughter, declare herself. His picture needed a human figure. On a rock in the foreground he started to work in, with rapid strokes, a presentment of the girl he had seen for a few fleeting moments in the little cleft. The sketch grew under his hand in a way which surprised even himself, and he felt a glow of satisfaction as he contemplated the work.

At lunch-time he left the picture, and sitting down at some distance from it, ate his lunch with keen relish. Then he smoked a pipe in thoughtful fashion, and finally made elaborate preparations for a *siesta*. In full view of any watcher he spread himself out behind a convenient rock and was soon, to all appearances, fast asleep. In reality, however, he was very much awake indeed, for he had laid a little trap for the spy whom he felt convinced was lurking somewhere among the rocks. If Don Andrea's daughter had in reality been observing him, he argued, she would have seen that he had put her into his picture. That being so, she would naturally, being a woman, wish to see how he had portrayed her. Her curiosity might bring her near enough for him to speak to her—for he had been curiously struck by her beauty.

Half an hour passed, and nothing happened, save that an eagle flapped lazily over the valley at a great height, a black blot against the cloudless azure of that burning southern sky. Drake was beginning to revile the clumsiness of his scheme, when suddenly he fancied he saw a slight movement behind a huge rock a little to his left. In a few seconds his suspicion became a certainty; a figure darted to a rock still nearer—and he knew it was the girl he had waited for. Nearer and nearer she came, still keeping under cover, until at last she had reached a boulder a little to his rear. Drake chuckled to himself as he watched her through his half-closed lids, for he noticed that if the girl came forward past him to look at the picture she could not very well run away without speaking to him.



Closer and closer came the girl, and the artist's

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heart beat fast. Now, he knew, she was scrutinising him to see whether he was likely to wake immediately. Would she decide, he wondered, that the risk of his waking and catching her was too great, or would she proceed to gratify her curiosity?

His cogitations were set at rest by the girl's next act. With a light step she tripped straight across from her place of concealment, cast one searching glance at Drake's immobile features, and then hurried on to the canvas, examining the portrait of herself with wide-opened eyes. While she was thus occupied Drake sat up. Now that for which he had schemed had come to pass, he felt rather ashamed of himself. Fortunately for himself, he was a fluent Spanish scholar.

"Is the *señorita* interested in my attempt to place her upon canvas?" he inquired.

The girl started violently and turned round, a wave of crimson spreading over her lovely face as she did so. She cast one look at Drake, and then her large, expressive eyes darted to the rocks behind him.

"I do not know what you must think of my intrusion, *señor*," she said at last, and the suspicion of a smile lurked for an instant round the corners of her mouth. "I thought that you slept—and—and——"

"Pray do not apologies, *señorita*," cried Drake. "I can assure you that I have been hoping to see you again every day, in order that I might beg of you the favour of a few sittings, so that I may complete my rough sketch."

The girl blushed again. "Are there not girls in Turgiana?" she asked.

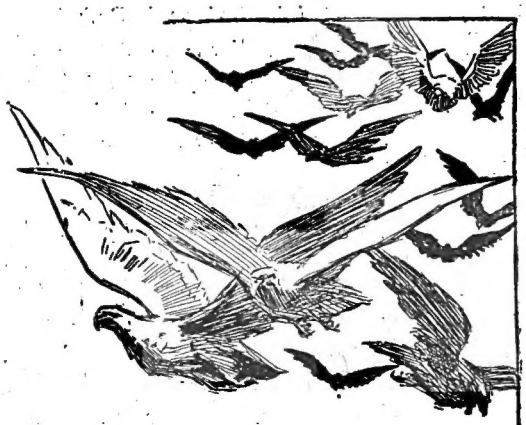
"You see, I have decided to put *you* in," said Drake. "And, besides, as you live so near the cascade, you have an interest in the picture."

"How do you know where I live?" asked the girl, her dark eyes resting on Drake's face.

"I guessed," confessed Drake. "Are you not the daughter of Don Andrea up at the castle yonder?"

"Yes," she said simply. "Then you have heard about my father?"

"I heard that he lived alone with his daughter," said Drake evasively, "and from the description I judged it to be you when I first saw you."



"Tell me," said the girl suddenly. "You are an Englishman?"

"Yes."

"My mother was an Englishwoman, but she died when I was a child. Tell me about England—what it is like."

Drake gave her a rapid sketch, as best he could, of his native country, but the girl clamoured for yet more information. She drank in his words with surprising interest, never once taking her lustrous eyes from off his face. At last, however, he stopped abruptly.

"We have quite forgotten the answer to my question," he declared laughingly. "You will give me some sittings, won't you?"

"I will try," she said. "*Adios, señor.*"

And before he could thank her she had slipped past him, and was running swiftly up the mountain side.

The meeting of that afternoon was the forerunner of many. On the day following their *tête-à-tête* Don Andrea's daughter suddenly appeared in the valley and greeted the artist with a shy smile. She consented to sit for just a few minutes. The minutes became an hour.

Drake had already completely lost his heart to this bewitching little mountain fairy, and he listened with the keenest pleasure to her conversation. Confidence once established, Juanita—for that was the girl's name—rapidly became communicative, and prattled unceasingly.

Drake learnt, in the first place, that she was lonely, unutterably lonely, which explained, perhaps, the interest she had taken in the strange painter *señor* who had penetrated into the valley. Drake learnt that it had been her custom from childhood onwards to ramble over the hill-sides. Her father, she said, was a strange man, a man of wild moods, and of late, but rarely to be seen. There had been a time when he had devoted a certain portion of each day to her education, but now he left her entirely alone, shutting himself up in his study in the watch-tower, where he fed and caressed his pets, the eagles. She was afraid, she said gravely, with a troubled look in her brown eyes, that he was going mad, for his heart

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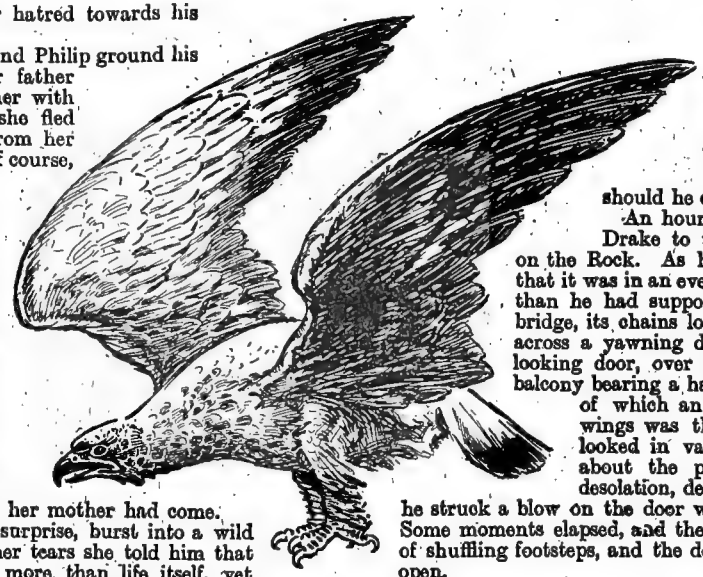
seemed filled with bitter hatred towards his fellow-men.

Sometimes, she said—and Philip ground his teeth at the recital—her father had beaten her, lashed her with a cruel whip, so that she fled from him screaming. From her entire seclusion she was, of course, entirely ignorant of events in the world around her; but she possessed an amazing quickness of observation which enabled her to readily understand and assimilate things that were new to her.



At last there came the climax that might have been expected. Philip told Juanita of his love, and how he wished to make her his wife; to take her away to that northern country whence her mother had come.

The girl, to his utter surprise, burst into a wild tempest of sobs. Amid her tears she told him that although she loved him more than life itself, yet she could never be his; that her father's insane hatred for all humankind would be a fatal bar, for he would assuredly kill both her and Drake when he heard of their intimacy.

"Courage, *querida mia*," said Philip, cheerily, taking the sobbing girl tenderly into his arms. "There will be no killing, I am sure. I will come up and see him, and explain matters, and then I daresay he will give us his blessing."

He spoke brightly, but as a matter of fact he did not quite know how this strange old man was to be approached.

Juanita sat up, her face white with terror.

"You would come to the Castle on the Rock?" she cried. "Felipe, that may never be. Do you not know the fate that overtakes all who come there? Have you no fear of the eagles that come and go at my father's word? They would tear you to pieces! And me—he would lash me, and never let me roam the hillsides again, so that I should never see you more." And she sobbed anew.

"I don't think I'm afraid of the eagles, dearest," said Philip. "Any how, I'm coming up to see him, and if he refuses his consent—well, then, I'll take you without, and we will get the *padre* at Turgiana to marry us. I'm not going to have you run any risks of perpetual imprisonment, or lashings, or any nonsense like that."

His determined tone somewhat reassured her, and the lovers parted, Juanita, however, still pale and trembling.

That afternoon Philip unfolded the whole history of the affair to the good old *padre*, who listened with open mouth and staring eyes. At first he was disposed to chide the young Englishman for having any dealings with the daughter of so strange a man, but finally he became keenly interested in the poor girl, shut up in that ancient castle with a brutal and apparently maniac father.

"Failing her father's consent, *padre*," pursued Philip, "I intend to take her away without it, as it is abundantly obvious that Don Andrea is no fit person to look after her. Moreover, she is of age. You shall marry us, *padre*, then and there, and I will take her away to my people in England. Thank God! I am well able to support her."

The priest had many objections to offer, but one by one these were demolished, and presently something of Drake's own enthusiasm infected him. He was much perturbed, however, at Philip's intention to visit the Castle on the Rock. He pointed out the dangers—no less real because imperfectly understood—that threatened him, and begged him to at least take some one with him. But Philip scoffed at the idea of danger, promising only to take a revolver in case of need. And so he departed.

No sooner had he gone than the old priest sent for Pepe and talked rapidly to him for some time. Ten minutes later Pepe set off swiftly up the mountain, keeping in Drake's track, but yet well out of sight should he chance to look round.

An hour's toilsome climb brought Drake to the vicinity of the Castle on the Rock. As he approached it, he saw that it was in an even more ruinous condition than he had supposed. An ancient drawbridge, its chains long since rotted away, lay across a yawning dry moat to a forbidding-looking door, over which projected a stone balcony bearing a half-obliterated escutcheon, of which an eagle with outstretched wings was the main device. Philip looked in vain for any signs of life about the place — everywhere was desolation, decay, and silence. Finally he struck a blow on the door with the stick he carried. Some moments elapsed, and then there came the sounds of shuffling footsteps, and the door was suddenly thrown open.

Inside the portal stood an old man, a man as tall as Drake, and straight as a die. His head and the lower part of his face were covered with a tangled mass of grey-white hair, but the most noticeable feature was his eyes, which burnt with extraordinary brightness from under his shaggy brows. He was attired in a long, loose-fitting coat of rusty black, belted at the waist.

"Well?" he demanded, in a deep, menacing voice, while his bright eyes looked the visitor through and through.

"My name is Drake," said Philip, unabashed. "I wish to see Don Andrea Almanza."

"I am he," replied the old man, sullenly. "My daughter told me you were coming. Enter, and come with me."

Philip stepped inside the great door, which the old man flung to behind him. He found himself in a wide and spacious hall, full of suits of armour and sculptured shields, all now thickly covered with cobwebs and dust.

The Don led the way to a room at the bottom of the hall. It contained a large oaken table and a few chairs, while light was afforded by a hanging brass lamp.

On one of the chairs the old man seated himself, and Philip, unbidden, took another. The Don stared at him coldly, evidently expecting him to speak.

"I gathered from your remark that your daughter has mentioned my name to you," began Drake, awkwardly. "To be brief, *señor*, I love your daughter, and she loves me. I desire to make her my wife, and——"

Before he could say more the old Spaniard turned upon him, his terrible eyes blazing with wrath.

"Say no more," he thundered. "You shall have my answer now. Against my express commands, that foolish girl has permitted herself to associate with people outside. For that I will see that she is properly punished. My answer to you is No!—do you hear me? No! Juanita lives and dies here with me. I am the last of my race, and my word is passed."

He spoke with extraordinary vehemence and bitterness.

"The man is evidently quite mad," soliloquised Philip.

"You express your views with unnecessary heat, sir," he said, aloud. "Surely you understand that a young girl cannot be cooped up for ever in a lonely house, shut off from all intercourse with the world. If by your reference to punishment of Juanita you allude to physical violence, I can only inform you that I have come here to-night with the firm intention of taking her away—if possible, with your consent, but if not without it. The priest of Turgiana will marry us, and she shall go home with me to her mother's country."

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Don Andrea turned on him, his glaring eyes literally snapping fire.

"You talk to me like that, you young English dog," he shouted. "Do you know that, if I will it, you will never reach yon village alive? Do you not know, fool, that I have sworn never again to hold communion with mankind, but to live and die here among the eagles, the birds of my house? Go, before my anger overpowers me. Juanita I will fittingly punish for her folly. She will never be yours—nor any other man's."

"You talk vainly, sir," said Philip, hotly. "Your insults and threats do not frighten me. It is quite evident to me that you are no fit person to have charge of Juanita. She leaves this place with me to-night, if I have to search every room in the house for her."

With a howl of concentrated fury the old man started to his feet, and something bright flashed upwards in his hand. There came a quick movement from behind, a shrill cry, and as Philip started back a stiletto went hurtling harmlessly towards the ceiling. Juanita, pale and trembling, stood by his side.

"So," hissed the old man, his baleful eyes now fixed on his daughter. "You would save his life, she-cat?"

"Father," said the girl, in a firm, clear voice, "your attempt to murder Felipe has decided me. I shall leave you for ever. You have for years ill-treated me, as you ill-treated my poor mother. Day by day you have got wilder and stranger in your moods, until it has come to this. Felipe," she said, turning to her lover, "I will come with you."

"It is well," replied Don Andrea, slowly, his burning orbs fixing themselves with slow malevolence on the pair. "You have marked out your own path. Go, and may my curse rest upon you, faithless daughter of the Almanzas. Go," he continued in a louder key, "you shall never darken the doors of the Castle on the Rock again."

He made towards the door, Drake and Juanita following him. In the hall he paused and looked back at them, standing hand in hand.

"Go," he said again, pointing with his bony finger towards the great door. "You shall see how the Lord of the Eagles pays his debts." He turned on his heel and disappeared.

"Come, Juanita," said Philip, turning to the girl. He noticed for the first time that she was dressed in her outdoor garb.

Drake unbarred the door, and threw it back. The night was cold and dark, and a faint mist filled the valleys.

Philip led the trembling girl across the drawbridge. As he passed under the shadow of the balcony, something liquid fell upon him—a warm sticky fluid, which made him start, fearing foul play. But no sound came from above, and wiping the stuff from his face he hastily cleared the narrow bridge, breathing a sigh of relief as he left the terrible house behind.

A hundred yards from the house Juanita stopped.

"Felipe," she said in an agonised voice, "What is this on your coat? Is it blood?"

"No, dearest," said Drake, linking his arm in her own. "Something or other dropped on me just as we were coming under the balcony."

"Jesu!" he heard her gasp. "Can it be?" Then she stopped and pressed her face to his coat. "Mother of Heaven, yes!"

"What is it?" asked Philip, struck by her terrified manner.

"He has covered you with the eagle-food," she cried, despairingly. "They can scent it miles away, and they will come to us. *Madre de Dios*, that he should be my father!" She burst out, with passionate energy.

"Great Scott!" said Philip. "Do you mean that this stuff attracts the birds, and that they will——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the terrible fate of poor Beppo occurred to him, and he shuddered at the devilish scheme which had sent him forth, with this hapless girl, to disfigurement and probably to death. It was quite useless to throw away his coat. He knew, but did not tell the girl, that the stuff had soaked into his shirt and had also covered his face and hands. Then he hurried her onward.

The path was difficult and hard to find, butalthough they strayed once or twice, Juanita knew the road too well to go far wrong. She clung tightly to her lover, but said never a word; only the look in her eyes told of her terror. Presently she looked over her shoulder into the blackness behind them. She said nothing, however, only hurried the faster. She appeared to be listening, and Philip found himself following her example. There came a momentary lull in the wind, and he fancied he heard another and different sound, somewhere high above him. Yes, he was sure of it—it was the whirring of wings!

"Felipe," said the girl, and her voice was calmer now. "Do you hear? It is the eagles; my father has sent them after us."

"I've got a revolver here," replied Drake, but in spite of himself he felt shaken by the eeriness of his surroundings. "We may be able to frighten them off if they come close."

The sounds were now manifestly closer, and occasionally a hoarse cry made them start with apprehension. Philip set his teeth and breathed a silent prayer. Danger in any tangible form he could have grappled with light-heartedly, but death from out of the dark—death in its most fantastic and horrible form—he knew not how to combat.

Suddenly there came a rushing sound above him, and a huge body swept just over his head. Quick as thought he snatched out his revolver and fired at it. A hoarse scream showed that the shot had taken effect.

Juanita, with a low moan, fell forward fainting. Scarce knowing what he did, Philip threw her across his shoulder and started to run. There came another rush of wings, and yet another bird sailed down upon him, its pinions striking his face. But again the revolver spoke, and although the bullet went wide the great creature flinched at the flash and disappeared in the darkness.

Streaming with perspiration, the young artist struggled onwards. Ever and anon he stumbled, for the way was rocky and the night black as ink, but now he could see the lights of the village far below him, and he prayed that he might be able to reach them before the eagles returned to the attack. But even as he ran two huge birds launched themselves at him, their cruel beaks and talons working savagely. He dodged the onslaught of one, but the other's claws tore at his shoulder until a third shot drove it away. The other bird then darted at him and with a blow of its wings sent him reeling to his knees, while its beak laid open his forehead. Blinded with blood, Drake nevertheless struggled to his feet, mindful even in this dire extremity of the necessity for keeping in motion. A fourth shot gave him a temporary respite, and he staggered onwards, scarce able to stand.

Again the dreadful noise of beating wings, again the hoarse cries from out the void, and the terrible birds of prey were on him once more. Their number he could not gauge, but they attacked him with incredible ferocity, flying always at his face. Beaten and buffeted by their great wings, his garments torn to shreds and his body bleeding in a dozen places, Philip at last realised that the end had come. A muffled groan from his unconscious burden told that she, too, had not escaped unscathed.

"Good God!" breathed Philip, hoarsely. "Her eyes!"

Too exhausted to run further, and weak from loss of blood, he placed the girl on the ground, face downwards, and stood

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over her for his last fight. He knew that there were but two cartridges between him and death—death by inches. This, then, was to be the end of his wooing—this was how the Lord of the Eagles was paying his debt!

Soon his last two shots were fired, and still the eagles flew at him, screeching shrilly. He was now an unrecognisable mass of blood and wounds.

"God help me! This is the end," he gasped, as with his last remaining strength he struck at the head of a fiendish bird with the butt of his weapon.

Suddenly he became dimly conscious of a running figure carrying a huge torch.

"Courage, *señor*," cried a well-known voice. "Courage. I am coming to you."

In a few seconds the courageous Pepe had reached him, and was striking right and left with his blazing brand. What the revolver had failed to do, the fire accomplished, for the eagles, affrighted at the blaze and heat, drew off sullenly. Pepe presently dragged his master and the girl into a sort of cave under some boulders. With his torch he lit a huge fire of moss and twigs, and then busied himself in tying up Drake's wounds. Juanita, with the exception of a bite in the arm, appeared to have escaped unhurt.

Next morning Pepe left the cave early, and soon returned with a procession of excited villagers carrying litters. Both Philip and Juanita were quite unconscious, and Philip's wounds caused horror-stricken comments among the peasants. Fortunately, however, his eyes had escaped injury. Under the care of the *padre* and a doctor, fetched from the nearest town, both gradually recovered, though for long hours Philip raved in a terrible delirium, brought on by his fearful struggle on the mountain-side.

At last, however, the day came when both were quite recovered, and then they were duly married by the old *padre*. Subsequently he broke to them a piece of news.

"Don Andrea is dead," he said gravely. "He died by his own hands. A large party of villagers went up to the Castle on the Rock to arrest him, as they said, for his unspeakable crime. They found him sitting dead in his study in the watch-tower." He crossed himself devoutedly. "May God rest his soul," he said. "The Lord of the Eagles will trouble you no more."

Beneath the Surface.

The Secret of a Double Life.

"What is this, Nora!—five hundred pounds? Nonsense! Tell Rose from me, that, as her guardian, I should not think of withdrawing so large a sum; just that she may squander it upon some calculating pauper or another!"

"But, Richard! why? It is a large amount, I know; but I think that you may trust Rose; while she seems to have an idea that she has a right to it; and that the one month only now remaining before she becomes legally entitled to the full possession of her fortunes is not worth reckoning with as a reason for not granting her request."

"Woman's logic!"

"Then I am to say to her that you refuse to do as she asks?"

"Yes. Stay, though!" (and he hurriedly turned, and sat down to his desk, drew a cheque-book from a drawer, and proceeded rapidly to fill in a form)—"There, give her that! (holding out the cheque) it's for fifty pounds, and drawn upon my own private account. When I hand over my responsibilities to this very liberal young lady's representatives, I want the trust funds to look as well as possible."

"Of course," said Nora Halpin, a trifle bewilderingly; for what knew she of ambidextrous money-juggling? "but you will have in the end to repay yourself out of the trust fund, won't you?"

"Well—no; this is a present of my own, and Rose is at liberty to make ducks and drakes of it, if she chooses."

"It is very good of you, Richard, to give her such a handsome present, but I am sadly afraid that she will be disappointed at the denial of her request."

"Woman's logic again! But she will thank me in a month's time for that same five hundred pounds."

The two speakers, Nora and Richard Halpin, were brother and sister. Living in a semi-fashionable West-end neighbourhood, they, with the addition of Richard Halpin's ward, Rose Ashenden, were, to all appearance, a fairly happy household.

Some five years before, the orphan daughter of Tedworth Ashenden, gold prospector, New York company-promoter, and of a hundred other equally indefinite occupations, came to England, consigned to the wardship of Richard Halpin, Ashenden's early chum in more than one expedition in the "Rookies."

With the girl came also a matter of £30,000; of which sum, till the heiress should attain her majority, Dick Halpin was appointed absolutely sole trustee.

The nature of the latter's calling, or business, was a mystery, not only to the world in general, but to those domestically connected with him. "Something in the City" might have fitted him, for every other day at least he paid it a visit of a few hours in the afternoon. On fine mornings, and occasionally at other times, he might be met with in Bond Street, or other "society" haunt.

But after the conclusion of the eight o'clock dinner, Richard Halpin's movements were known to no man. He left the house in Barchester Gardens, Earl's Court, in evening dress under a long ulster, and on foot, returning in precisely the same manner at an early hour the next morning. He was supposed to be at his club, he himself endorsing the supposition by an occasional reference to the fact.

There was never any money stint in the Barchester Gardens' establishment, everything being ordered on the most liberal scale. But there was no social entertaining; and for the very good reason that the master of the house was never at home to receive guests. Nora and Rose had one or two girl inti-

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mates, old schoolmates of the former's, but beyond that it was a peculiarly isolated one, so far as "society" was concerned.

The Halpins' father had been a rich man, and, at his death, left a good provision for his daughter, and a not insignificant fortune to his son. And yet, altogether unknown to his sister, Richard Halpin was soon at his wit's end for ready money. Up to that time, he was free living, certainly, but not secretive.

Then, less than a year after his father's death, Rose Ashenden became a member of his household, and there was a curious launching out in every direction. A larger house was taken, an extra carriage added, and a greater display made generally.

It was about a year before his ward's twenty-first birthday that he became conscious of a feeling for her, different from anything which he had hitherto experienced.

Four years had worked wonders, and the sixteen-year-old child had developed into the lovely woman.

She was in direct contrast to Nora Halpin, being tall and singularly dignified in carriage and manner. Nora, on the other hand, was *petite*, and brimful of Puck-like merriment.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the somewhat *blasé* man of thirty-five should be attracted by so charmingly innocent a daughter of mother nature, or that the guardian should give place to the lover.

But, somehow, he seemed fearful of making any advance, and it was not until Nora one day taxed him with it, that he acknowledged his passionate soul-mastering love for his beautiful ward.

The revelation was a matter not only of surprise but of distressful concern to Nora.

"Richard," she said, "apart from the fact that Rose is far too young as a wife for you, there is a reason why it cannot be; a reason which, if you persist, will assuredly mean trouble both for you and—for her."

"Reason! what reason?" he cried angrily. "I know of none; and if you are, as you seem to be, better informed, why have you not told me? Why have you kept me in the dark?"

"I am very sorry," she began.

"That is as it may be," he retorted, with a shrug; "this reason—what is it?"

"Well, I fear—I mean I am sure, that—that—there is—someone else."

"Someone else! But she sees nobody! It's impossible!"

"I am afraid not, Richard."

"Who is it? Tell me that—who is it?"

"You know that young fellow—Mr. Doyle, I think his name is—who comes every month from Varr's Bank—I suppose on Rose's business?"

"A two-penny halfpenny bank clerk!"

"He is really very nice, Richard!"

"Oh, I see! You are one of the conspirators, then?"

"I don't know what you mean," she replied. "There is no occasion for you to be rude."

"Why did not you tell me of this before?"

"I am beginning to regret that I have told you now."

"That is no answer to my question!" he blazed out. "Send Rose to me!"

"Certainly not! She is in the drawing-room, and if you wish to see her, you had best ask her for an interview—yourself!"

The offended little lady then swept out of her brother's "den," and left him to his devices.

The interview which followed between guardian and ward was stormy, but in every way definite.

"Young Doyle," he said coarsely, "wants your money! At least that cannot be said of me."

"Such an insinuation!" she indignantly replied, "is a cowardly slander, Mr. Halpin! And even had I not already made up my mind to reject unequivocally your somewhat condescending offer to marry me, that which you have just said of an infinitely better man than yourself, behind his back, would most certainly incline me to come to the same resolution."

"Well, I shall forbid Sidney Doyle the house, giving the bank people to understand that the appointment of another agent is, from my point of view, desirable. I prohibit any communication whatsoever between you. Remember! until you are finally freed from my control, my word is law!"

"How very courteous!" she, with a peculiar smile, remarked in reply. Then, rising from her chair, she moved towards the door. Reaching it, she turned quickly, and faced him.

"Could I but follow my own inclinations," she said, with fine scorn, "I would leave your house on the instant. But you have the law on your side. However, I think we understand each other," she added, meaningly. "You cannot prevent my loving Sidney Doyle or he me; and I tell you that his little finger is, in my esteem, worth more—a hundred times more!—than are you—body and soul!"

"Understand each other!" he said to himself after she was gone. "What can she mean? She knows nothing! She *can* know nothing!"

Others, beside Richard Halpin, live in the delusive and unhealthy atmosphere of a "Fool's Paradise." Richard Halpin continued so to live, until the day when his sister Nora first began to suspect his honesty and truth; the day of his refusal to Rose of the five hundred pounds she had asked him for from the trust funds.

On the evening of that day, upon the stroke of ten, a card was brought to his "den."

He was ready dressed to go out; was in the act of lighting a cigar.

"Gentleman to see you, sir."

"Gentleman to see me, at this time of night!" he said, picking up the pasteboard from the extended salver. "Mr. Sidney Doyle! I am not at home, Clarkson!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Halpin," said a tall, fair young fellow, who stood in the doorway, "but my business is imperative. I *must* see you!"

"Sir! is this your house!—or is it mine?"

"Yes, I know that my visit is ill-timed probably, and that I am, perhaps, taking too much upon myself, but I deemed it fair to give you the opportunity of making an explanation."

"An explanation!—to you?"

"To me."

"May I ask," said Richard Halpin icily, "the nature of the explanation?"

"I desire to put a question to you."

"And that is——"

"I want you to tell me, Mr. Halpin, here and now, what has become of the £30,000 invested in Three per Cents, and standing in your name as trustee for Rose Ashenden in the books of the Bank of England, the dividend warrants of which have been held by Varr's Bank as security for a drawing account of the Ashenden Trust."

Richard Halpin's face paled ever so little, though his heart stood still, as he said, somewhat mechanically the other thought, "I do not, in the first place, recognise your right to put such a question to me; but if on this day month you can show me to my satisfaction that such a right is yours, I will do my best to satisfy you—then——"

"It might have been better for you, perhaps, to have answered me now. As to my right, Miss Ashenden will, I believe, be willing to make that point perfectly clear—should you care to ask her."

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"I have an appointment, sir, and, therefore, have no time to waste in idle talk."

"So be it, then; I will ask you this question again on this day month. Good evening."

"You young fool!" cried Halpin, as the door shut behind his visitor. "To-night you would have triumphed had you insisted upon the truth. On this day month it will be my turn, for either the trust fund will be found intact, or Dick Halpin will have returned again to the golden fastnesses of the dear old 'Rockies!'"

He relit his cigar, which had gone out during his interview with Sidney Doyle, buttoned his big coat, pulled down his crush hat well over his eyes, passed through the front door, and so into the street; his face turned eastwards.

When a dozen yards away from the house, a man dressed in grey tweed slipped out of the shadow of the next doorway, and followed at a prudent distance stealthily in Halpin's wake.

It was Sidney Doyle, Rose's lover.

* * * * * * *

Haul-Bowline Alley is a blind court, or narrow yard, within a stone's throw of Limehouse Church.

It is dirty, fœtid of odour, and contains just ten houses—or, rather, shanties—five on either side.

These dwellings all belonged to one man, whom no one ever saw, the rent collection being in the hands of a local agent. The landlord lived in the West-end, and apparently concerned himself but little with the affairs of his East-end property.

One curious fact in connection with the place was that everyone of its sixty or seventy inhabitants was Chinese. It was, indeed, an Oriental colony.

The five houses on the left hand as you entered, were practically knocked into one, and run as one establishment.

Opium-den, low lodging-house, gambling hell, and what not, it was peculiar in this, that to it, at all hours through the night, until daybreak, there came men of all nationalities; most of them decently, some of them well dressed, who stayed—any time from a quarter to half an hour—in private talk with the master of the house.

The latter was a Chinaman, who, however, was never seen about the place until an hour before midnight.

Chi-Lung was a mystery, even among his compatriots. His business, when on the premises, was to regulate the "fantan" and "poker" tables in the gambling department, and to receive and deal with the night visitors already mentioned.

Sometimes it happened that the caller arrived in a cab, with a bulky cargo. In such a case, the stranger was evidently expected, as one or two low-class Chinamen were invariably in waiting under the entrance archway. These rapidly removed the contents of the cab into the last house on the left of the alley, in which was situated Chi-Lung's sanctum. The new-comer then followed quickly, and the cabman, always paid by one of the Chinamen, drove swiftly away.

When Richard Halpin, on the night of his interview with young Sidney Doyle, left Barchester Gardens, Earl's Court, his course was steadily eastwards.

Along the Old Brompton Road, through Knightsbridge, and past Hyde Park Corner, up Piccadilly. Long Acre reached, he turned into a certain little public-house at the corner of a court, and called for a whisky and soda.

This disposed of, he made a sign to the barman, who, nodding in reply, came through into the bar, and unlocked a door, which led up to the first floor.

Closing the door behind him, Halpin mounted the stairs, at the top of which was a small bedroom, the door open.

The gas was lit, while on the bed were carefully laid out what looked like a fancy-dress ball costume.

It was a Chinaman's dress, the outer sleeveless jacket being of fine black silk.

Closing the door, and then looking at his watch, Halpin proceeded to rapidly divest himself of his dress clothes, shoes, and shirt.

In less than seven minutes he had donned the Celestial garb, and, when he had deftly and quickly stained his face, neck and hands, put on a scalp wig, with a pigtail attached, that fitted to perfection, he stood confessed the veriest Chinaman that ever walked the streets of Peking.

When, a minute later, he left the room, the immaculate European clothes had taken the place of the Celestial on the bed.

Going past the door which led into the bar, and through which he had entered the passage, the pseudo-Celestial, producing a key, opened a door at the end of the latter, and passed into the court.

Cautiously looking about him, he turned to the left, and out again into Long Acre.

All the way from Barchester Gardens had Sidney Doyle followed in the wake of his quarry.

He had distinctly seen Halpin enter the "saloon" entrance of the public-house, and there his quest ended. About a quarter of an hour after he saw a Chinaman in native garb issue from the court into Long Acre, but as to sign of Richard Halpin there was none.

Whether it were intuition or inspiration it is hard to say, but something impelled him to take up the trail of the Celestial.

Right along Holborn he followed him, over the Viaduct, up Newgate Street, Cheapside, Leadenhall Street, Whitechapel, Commercial Road, East India Dock Road, until Limehouse was reached.

It was a long and weary walk for even a strong young fellow like Sidney Doyle, but he was fairly athletic, and held on bravely.

As for the Chinaman, he plodded along in steady fashion, quite oblivious, however, of Nemesis in his rear.

It was not until the entrance to Haul-Bowline Alley came in sight that Doyle, who, up to that moment, could not have located his man, made a discovery.

It suddenly flashed upon him that the walk of the man in front of him was familiar. Where had he seen it?

Then it came to him! It was the peculiar wide-legged stride of Richard Halpin!

Putting on steam he tried to come up with the other; but just as he came within hailing distance, Halpin turned smartly into the alley and vanished.

Doyle stopped, and looked down the wretched place, but the place was silent as the grave.

He ventured a few steps into the alley, but was obliged to confess to defeat, and to turn back.

While hesitating as to what he should do, a four-wheeler drove up, out of which got a sprucely-dressed man, carrying a large "Gladstone."

The usual thing was about to happen, the two Chinamen issuing out of the archway shadows to proffer help if needful. In this instance it was not, one of them merely paying and dismissing the driver.

But the unexpected followed close upon the heels of the usual.

No sooner did the man with the handbag make to pass under the archway, than a cloud of policemen seemed to rise out of the ground.

Two of them seized the new-comer, easing him of his "Gladstone," while two others laid hands upon Sidney Doyle.

It did not take long for the latter to explain his position, the superintendent in charge of the raid consenting to accept the young bank clerk's assistance, in view of Doyle's knowledge on certain matters connected with the case.

"You see, sir," the policeman explained, "there was a big robbery of diamonds down in the country last week; nearly

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seventy thousand pounds worth; belonging to the Countess of Rugby.

"We lost sight of the thieves altogether till this morning, when one of them split, and told us that this joker we've just nabbed would come here to-night with the stuff on him, to do a deal with Chi-Lung."

"You seem to doubt that this Chinese 'fence' is really Richard Halpin, who is more than suspected of breach of trust in connection with the Ashenden Trust Fund?"

"Well, sir, I do; because I've seen this Chi-Lung several times, and am prepared to swear almost as to his nationality."

"A very little time will show," said Doyle, "and then I, for one, shall be intensely surprised, should my surmises turn out to be incorrect."

The police raid on the Limehouse den was abundantly detailed in the newspapers of the next day, and most people must be fairly familiar with the particulars.

The most important detail, however, was the escape of Chi-Lung, otherwise Richard Halpin.

With the daring natural to him, he contrived to reach Barchester Gardens before the police arrived there.

Nora was, of course, asleep, and started with fright to see her brother standing by her bedside.

"Have you any ready money?" he said. "I am summoned unexpectedly to Paris, and must catch the earliest train to Newhaven."

"Richard! you look ill! What is the matter?"

"Never mind what is the matter! It is money I want, as much as you have by you."

"I have a hundred pounds of my own in my desk."

"Give me the key!"

"Here it is! But do tell me what it all means?"

"You will know soon enough. Meanwhile answer no questions. Good-bye!"

A rush into Nora's sitting-room, a seizing of the notes; and leaving the key in the desk, Halpin, who had changed his clothes and disguise at the little public-house in Long Acre, threw a big coat over his arm, and strolled out at the door into the street.

In Earl's Court Road he hailed a crawling hansom, directing the driver to make good speed for London Bridge Station.

He chose this terminus instead of Victoria or Addison Road, cunningly calculating that his chances would be better in the city.

Within half an hour of his leaving the house, the police arrived.

The two girls were both terror stricken, and distressed beyond measure.

Woman's sympathies are always easy to invoke on behalf of even the very worst, who are in danger of the law's grip. Nora, as the defaulting trustee's sister, was, of course, more keenly grieved and overcome. Rose Ashenden, who as yet was ignorant of her loss of heritage, feeling only that general pity, the pity for the hunted, howsoever criminal.

With the police came Sidney Doyle, who did all he might do for the girls' comfort and protection.

He felt bound to confide to Nora the truth of the disappearance of the trust funds, and she, though bitterly conscious of the shame and disgrace which must inevitably fall upon herself, had to confess that the news did not come to her altogether as a surprise. Though certain of nothing, she had suspected for long that something was amiss.

Leaving them to their rest, Sidney Doyle returned to Barchester Gardens the next morning, and at an interview with the two, suggested and carried his point that they should avail themselves, for the present at least, of his sister's hospitality.

Early in the day, the move was effected, and though the young fellow's income is by no means colossal of proportion, still the probabilities are decidedly in favour of an early wedding with Nora as bridesmaid.

Not that the latter is unmindful of the brother who left her, with means of her own certainly, but practically alone in the world.

On investigation it transpired that every penny of the Ashenden Trust money had been transferred to his own account, and that at the time of the *exposé*, it had absolutely melted away. Where it went to has never yet been traced.

Halpin had, it seemed, purchased the Haul-Bowline Alley property soon after he commenced to tamper with the Fund, with the idea—which he eventually and fully carried out—of making it the basis and centre of a vast criminal undertaking.

A marvellous actor, he succeeded for a period of nearly three years to deceive native-born Chinamen with his assumption of the *role* of Chi-Lung.

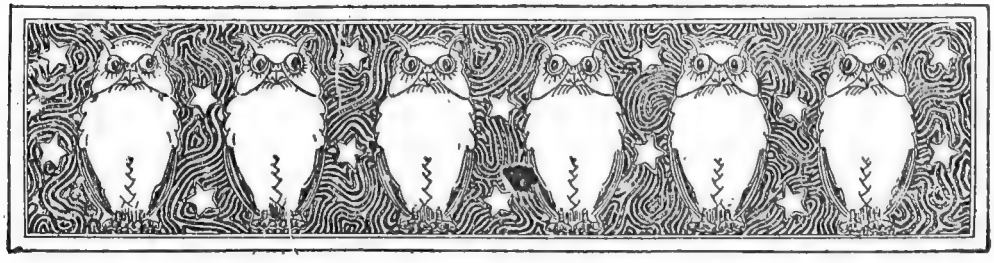
Always using *pigeon* English of the purest variety and accent, he, with a long experience in the North-West provinces of the Chinese Empire deluded the very elect.

He had hoped to recoup some heavy losses by the buying of the Rugby diamonds, but failed, as we have seen, to carry out the transaction.

What has become of him no man can tell. Probably he is in some far-away Western or North-Western State, where gold may be had for the delving, but where life is held in but very little esteem.

That his end will be peace is unlikely; while should he seek to lead the double life in a place where men do not readily brook the imposture which aims at their own throats, it is on the cards that he will meet the fate of his sometime chum and partner, Tedworth Ashenden, who, a rich man, and on the eve of enjoying his wealth, met his death in a Western "saloon" at the hands of the bully of the community.

Ralph Enderby.



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All you need do is to send out your copy or copies of SHORT STORIES and wait until it comes back to you with the names filled in.

The first prize will be awarded to the person whose copies of SHORT STORIES contain the greatest number of names of people to whom the copies have been sent, provided that the wrappers which carried the copies of SHORT STORIES through the post to each person accompanies the list.

It is not necessary for you to know the people whose names you will find on your list when your copy comes back; they will, of course, be the friends of your friends.

There is no absolute necessity to write a letter to your friend explaining the scheme, but if you did so it would carry more weight.

HOW TO SEND IN.

Keep the wrappers as they are sent to you, and when this copy comes back send all the wrappers together with this copy to the Editor of "Short Stories," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., in an envelope marked "PASS-IT-ALONG," to arrive not later than Thursday, July 24th.

NOTE.—Competitors may send out at the same time any number of copies of this issue.

The Editor's decision is final, and readers may enter only on this understanding.

(B)

INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE THIS COPY BY POST.

This copy of SHORT STORIES has been sent to you by a friend who is interested in this competition and who wants to win one of the prizes offered. When you have read this announcement write your name down in the space provided, and then forward this copy *at once* in a penny wrapper to a friend of yours. If you have no friend to whom you can send it, return the copy of the paper, *together with the wrapper in which you received it*, to the original sender.

If the original sender of this paper (whose name and address is written at the foot of this page) wins the first prize, *you* will receive £1; if second prize, *you* will get 10s. The paper must be returned to the original sender on or before Saturday, July 19th.

You must at once return the wrapper in which this copy reaches you to _____

_____

(Competitor must insert here his or her name and address.)

IMPORTANT.

Fill in your name at once and post it on the day this is received. If you keep it longer it will lessen the chance of the original sender securing the first prize, as the paper will not be able to get into so many hands within the time limit.

If you receive this copy on Saturday, July 19th, fill up your name and post it at once to the sender, whose name appears at the foot of this page.

Why Not Try Yourself?

If you want to enter for this competition yourself, and win one of the prizes get a copy of SHORT STORIES from your newsagent at once, and follow the instructions marked "A."

This offer will be repeated in SHORT STORIES for July 26th (the next number but one), when another £20 will be offered in awards.

Those to whom this copy is sent sign here.

	NAME.	ADDRESS.
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Those who sign here will get £1 each if this wins first award.

* Name and Address of Competitor.....

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THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

Revelations in High Life by a Lady's Companion.

The writer of this series of true stories acted for many years in the capacity of lady's companion to a Society adventuress who lived by robbing her unsuspecting guests. Names have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but the facts are correct.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Mrs. NORTON	An adventuress who makes her money by robbing her friends.
CYNTHIA	Her cousin and companion who, when the events related below took place, was quite unsuspicious of Mrs. Norton's guilt.
FLUFFY	An accomplice of Mrs. Norton's.
LORD KINROSS	One of Mrs. Norton's most devoted admirers.
SIR JOHN STRICKLAND	A poor baronet who is deeply in love with Mrs. Norton.
MARY VERNON . . .	At one time engaged to be married to Lord Kinross.
HIRAM PETTIGREW .	An American millionaire.
PERCIVAL HOPE . . .	Pettigrew's secretary.

Mrs. Norton: Adventuress.

Cynthia: Her companion.

FRANKIE IS PRESENTED AT COURT.
PERCIVAL HOPE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW READERS.

CYNTHIA tells in the opening chapter of her arrival at her cousin's in the capacity of companion, and of her discovery that Mrs. Norton is taking part in midnight card games, at which large sums of money are being lost and won. The climax is reached one night when Mary Vernon stakes her diamond ear-rings (a gift from Lord Kinross) and one of the onlookers finds them to be paste. Mary Vernon declares that they are exactly as given to her by Lord Kinross, whereupon Kinross breaks off the engagement. The diamonds subsequently appear as a gift from Fluffy to Mrs. Norton, set in a pair of hat-pins. A few weeks later the notorious Mrs. Norton, with Fluffy's help, succeeds in stealing a pocket-book, containing about eight thousand pounds in paper money, from Hiram Pettigrew at the Café Regal, by substituting for the millionaire's pocket-book one exactly like it. Later on Cynthia discovers the original pocket-book, empty of course, in one of her boxes. Not knowing what to do, she confides in Fluffy, who is very kind, but makes her promise to say nothing at all to anyone else on the subject. He takes charge of the duplicate pocket-book. Mrs. Norton now moves into her new house in Pont Street, and it is while here that Sir John Strickland, a poor baronet, proposes to her. She refuses, but hints to him that if he will consent to allow his name to appear on the directorate of certain companies he will be bound to make money, and then her answer might be different. Mrs. Norton is now to be presented at Court by her friend, Lady Gaveston.

LADY GAVESTON arrived late in the evening of a very rainy day. She was a tall and rather bony person, with a large head, and dressed in a painfully uncompromising fashion, strong-minded from the crown of her deerstalker hat to the hem of her homespun skirt. She arrived in a four wheeler, and altercated fiercely as to the correct fare from St. Pancras. This last much to the scandal of Skinner the butler, Frankie's latest addition to our household. Having worsted the cabman, and abashed Skinner, milady retired in triumph to the house and received Frankie's welcome with toleration if not affability.

"Dear Lady Gaveston, it gives me such pleasure to have you," said my cousin sweetly.

"Thank you," returned the elder lady, "you've a very impudent fellow for a servant, and there's a deal too much flummery about your rooms, draperies I suppose you call 'em—for health, still I've no doubt you are well intentioned." She smiled grimly at Frances, who, for the moment was at a loss for reply.

"She's rather dreadful," murmured she, when Lady Gaveston had departed to her room, "and very hideous, still no one can deny she's unimpeachably respectable," and my cousin went into peals of laughter.

It soon became plain that the relations between Frankie and Lady Gaveston were of a strictly business character. No love was lost between them, neither was there any waste of hate. Milady chaperoned my cousin unremittingly if severely, and received every courtesy and attention in return. The keen, shrewd Scotchwoman, puritan, with a dash of worldly wisdom, did not approve of my cousin, neither her house, nor the company she kept, but having undertaken—for a consideration—to ascertain things, those things her ladyship would carry through.

We were very busy those days at designing new costumes, and discussing the all important *toilette* for Frankie's presentation.

As a rule my cousin spent but little time in choosing her frocks, she knew exactly what suited her, and never hesitated as to style, colour, or cut. But over her Court gown she deliberated long and gravely. The result paid handsomely for her pains.

One afternoon, the day before the presentation, we were sitting in the drawing-room, Lady Gaveston, Lord Kinross and myself, when suddenly Frankie appeared in her court dress.

"I thought you'd like to see my frock, Cynthia," she spoke

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to me but looked towards Lord Kinross. "It's just come home."

She stood near the window, tall and slim and fair, the spring sunshine falling on the red gold of her hair, her soft white neck and arms glittering with jewels. Her gown was satin, of a deep shade of cream, falling softly from the waist and wonderfully embroidered with silver *fleur-de-lis*—a purple petalled iris peeping every here and there, or a faint-hued leaf of green. The bodice was veiled with lace, kept in place by tiny butterflies of emerald and amethyst with golden wings. The train also of satin lay in rich folds a yard or so upon the floor, showing a glimpse of the lining of mauve silk with dainty frills of pale green chiffon. A fine necklet of gold and emeralds was clasped about her throat; on her hair were diamonds.

I think we all admired her, though each showed their admiration in such different ways. Lady Gaveston stared hard, and gave a little sniff; Lord Kinross smiled in the leisurely approving fashion that most men adopt at the sight of a handsome woman well gowned, while I uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Oh, Frankie, you are perfect. Isn't she, Lord Kinross?"

"Quite," he said softly, "quite," then bending towards her, half smiling. "Shall I send you round the family jewels? You said you'd like to wear them at your presentation."

Frankie laughed and shook her head. "I wouldn't run such a risk for all the world. Suppose I lost them?"

"That wouldn't matter, they are insured."

"All the same I should feel responsible."

"The fact is you don't like to appear in borrowed plumes—or rather jewels."

"Perhaps."

"Well there are other diamonds beside the Kinross heirlooms—emeralds don't suit that gown, Mrs. Norton."

"I don't agree with you."

"At all events that necklet isn't becoming, the style is too severe, not like you a bit. It reminds me of Sir John—had he anything to do with its selection?"

"You are inquisitive, Lord Kinross."

"Interested merely, Mrs. Norton. Sir John's taste is too simple, I understand what suits you much better. I am convinced you should wear diamonds."

"I am not sure——" she began.

He interrupted her. "Suspend your judgment till to morrow."

She glanced at him interrogatively, but he merely bowed and smilingly took his leave.

Sir John did not call on us that day, he was very busy company promoting and spent nearly all his time in the City.

His work seemed to agree with him however, he looked younger every time he came.

"I'm sorry Sir John can't see you, Frankie," I said, "you look so very nice."

"Oh, he's sure to look in to-morrow before we start. He'll find a spare half hour for that. Eh, Lady Gaveston?"

But the Baronet's widow made no reply save for a slight sniff.

The next day was bright and sunny, and my cousin in high spirits and good humour; Lady Gaveston in her court gown of stiff grey silk trimmed with Irish point, if not prepossessing, was undeniably good style, Frankie had never looked better in her life.

Sir John called early in the morning, with an exquisite bouquet of orchids, pale mauve shaded to a deep purple, with trails of asparagus fern. Just after his arrival there came a special messenger with a small parcel addressed to Frankie in Lord Kinross' writing. I took up the parcel and the bouquet to my cousin's room.

"Sir John's downstairs Frankie, he's brought these orchids—aren't they exquisite?" and I handed her the flowers.

"Yes—what's this packet?"

"A messenger just brought it from Lord Kinross."

For a moment Frankie hesitated, colour flushed her cheeks and she fingered at the string.

"Sir John's waiting, Frankie," I urged quietly.

"I know — but I *must* see what's inside." She opened the packet as she spoke. It contained a jeweller's box of red morocco leather; with an exclamation she pressed the spring, against the satin lining lay a necklace, shining and glittering in the sun, a necklace of diamonds.

"How beautiful, how beautiful! She took the necklace in her hands holding it against her throat, against the fine gold chain, simple and severe, that Kinross had found fault with. Watching her face reflected in the glass, I saw her expression slowly change. She seemed to grow hard and cold before my eyes, hard as her diamonds.

With a sudden gesture Frankie unclasped the chain and laid it on the table, then with a curious uncertainty she took up the diamonds.

I could not bear that she should wear them, I could not bear that she should fling that other gift, Sir John's, so contemptuously aside.

Downstairs he was waiting, watching for her with impatient, eager eyes.

Would she go to him wearing another man's jewels?

"Sir John's waiting, Frankie," I said once more, and wondering at my own audacity, I placed the diamond necklace in the box, and snapped the spring.

Frankie watched me with a funny little smile, then with a shrug turned away.

"Silly child," she said. "You're as sentimental as Sir John himself. No, I won't put on his emeralds, if I can't wear what I like, I'll have nothing." She stood for a moment by the door, then called me to her quickly.

"Bring the necklace down, Cynthia, the diamonds I mean. Sir John won't stay long, and——"

"You're going to wear it after all?" I cried.

"Of course, did you suppose it was only to be looked at?"

She ran quickly down the stairs, paused for a second outside the room where he was waiting, then entered—I doubt not with the smile he knew and loved so well.

Their interview was short. Lady Gaveston, the soul of punctuality was impatient, and but a few minutes elapsed before I was called down.

"Yes he's gone, give them to me." Turning, she clasped the jewels about her throat, careless of Lady Gaveston's gravely disapproving air.

I watched her down the steps into the carriage—on her way to Court.

I was puzzled for something to do for the next few hours. It was too fine to sit at home, and yet I had nowhere particular to go; it is so dull to walk by one's self, this perhaps accounted for the pleasure I felt at sight of Fluffy.

"Suppose we go and have a look at the *débutantes*, Miss Cynthia. The carriages stand for hours along the Buckingham Palace Road and I should like to see your cousin."

"What a splendid idea. I'll get ready now and come with you. I was just longing to go out."

Fluffy suggested a hansom to Victoria, but it was too fine a day to waste, so we walked up Piccadilly and down Grosvenor Place to where the stream of carriages commenced. There were plenty of sightseers, besides us, young girls of the middle class eager to criticise their more fashionable sisters, to envy and admire their clothes; some there were of the very poor; women with babies in their arms, and children

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"CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA."
New Series of Stories.

dragging at their skirts, flower sellers, hawking sweet violets, a British matron or so, and a plentiful sprinkling of street boys.

I cast an inquisitive glance at the inmates of most of the carriages, fair girls dressed in white, young married women blazing with jewels, stately dowagers with severe head dresses.

"Well, what do you think of the show, Miss Cynthia?"

"They all look nice, but none of them touch Frankie."

"No? Well I think you're right, there's your cousin, Miss Cynthia." He pointed out the carriage, but made no attempt to draw any closer. "By the by, she's wearing some fine diamonds?"

"Yes, Lord Kinross sent them," I answered unthinkingly, remembering too late that I was forbidden to speak of my cousin's affairs.

"Ah? Your cousin's lucky, Miss Cynthia."

"I think so. Is Lord Kinross very rich, Mr. Thomson?"

"He has about £20,000 a year."

"As much as that?" I sighed; poor Sir John, why had he only fifteen hundred?

"Do people get rich quickly in the City, Mr. Thomson?"

"Some do, Miss Cynthia, smart men make their pile as quickly there as anywhere else."

"Could a smart man make as much as £20,000 a year?"

"He might make more."

"Really? I am glad of that." He smiled at my enthusiasm, but I did not mind, I felt happy to think that after all Sir John might not have to wait so very long to marry Frances.

A great many people came to Pont Street that afternoon after Frankie returned. Some of Lady Gaveston's friends dropped in, Lord Kinross turned up with two or three men, and Mrs. Curtis Blount brought the man in glasses. The drawing-room seemed quite full, everyone was chatting and laughing, congratulating Frankie on her success and admiring her gown.

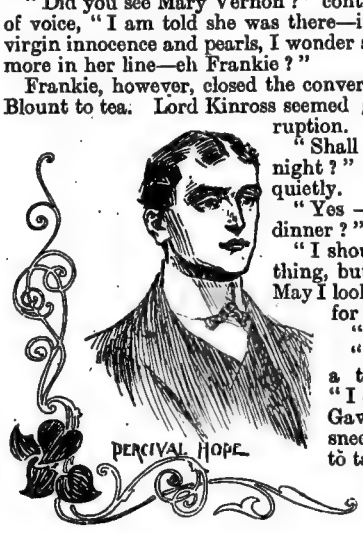
She had it seemed made a sensation, and it was reported that a certain royal personage had signified his admiration in a marked manner.

"You've made a tremendous hit, my dear," said Mrs. Curtis Blount. "Lady Chanleigh declared there was no one there to hold a candle to you—or your diamonds." There was a note of malice in the last remark that did not escape my cousin.

"It's nice of you to admire me, Vi dear," she answered sweetly.

"Did you see Mary Vernon?" continued Vi in a loud tone of voice, "I am told she was there—in white, you know, all virgin innocence and pearls, I wonder she chose pearls, paste's more in her line—eh Frankie?"

Frankie, however, closed the conversation by pressing Mrs. Blount to tea. Lord Kinross seemed grateful for the interruption.



"Shall you be at home to-night?" he asked my cousin quietly.

"Yes — won't you stay to dinner?"

"I should like to above everything, but I can't manage it. May I look in about nine, in time for coffee?"

"We shall be delighted."

"We?" he repeated in a tone of dissatisfaction. "I don't want to see Lady Gaveston, or," he gave a sneer, "Sir John. I want to talk to you, shall you be alone?"

Frankie flushed, hesitated—the opportunity for reply was lost, Fluffy quietly but firmly demanded tea.

"Cynthia, why don't you look after people," said my cousin sharply.

"I offered Mr. Thomson tea some time ago," I answered, "but he wouldn't have it."

"A thousand pardons for troubling you, Mrs. Norton, but you always remember how I like my tea; Miss Cynthia forgets."

Fluffy smiled serenely and helped himself to sugar.

For the remainder of the afternoon he kept quite close to Frankie, and somehow prevented Lord Kinross from further confidential conversation with her, though his Lordship did his best.

Opposition made him but the more determined. He waited until nearly everyone had gone; then, turning his back to Fluffy, approached my cousin.

"I may hope to see you, then, to-night?" he asked.

Over his shoulder Fluffy telegraphed a most emphatic "No," but Frankie frowned at the signal.

"*No*," reiterated Fluffy, with eyes and hands and head.

My cousin smiled. "I shall expect you," she said sweetly, "about nine."

I had occasion to fetch something from the drawing-room, about half an hour later. Fluffy and Frances were still talking.

"You'll take your own way, of that I am aware," he was saying as I entered, "but remember, I've warned you."

"What is your reason?" she retorted. "Why should I not see him to-night? 'Tis your insane jealousy, nothing else."

Fluffy laughed. "I rather think I'm past that sort of thing," he said quietly.

"What other explanation can there be?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Explanations are things I carefully avoid," he said. "I merely give advice, or, rather, offer it."

"You must be more explicit."

"Pardon me, there is no compulsion."

"But——" she paused, silenced by what she read on his face.

"You prefer not to take my advice?" he said. "Very well, it is your affair. I shall, however, look in some time after nine. You may be glad of me."

He spoke quite softly, amiably even, but Frankie, with heightened colour, swept from the room, without a backward look. I saw her no more till after dinner; she was tired, and had some food sent to her room.

No wonder, I thought, if she were worn out, considering what an eventful day she had passed through. To have been presented at Court, to have achieved so marked a success—her gown would be reproduced in all the fashionable papers, and her diamonds were mentioned in the *Queen*—these things, if exhilarating, were fatiguing. Still, the day had been a triumph, and now, to crown her victory, behold Lord Kinross at her feet, praying for a private interview.

"Lord Kinross is here, Frankie, are you going to see him?"

"Yes, this minute. And, Cynthia, don't let anybody interrupt us."

I followed her downstairs feeling most unhappy. "Frankie," I said as we reached the hall. "Frankie——" then hesitated.

"Well, what is it?"

"You're not going——" I paused. "Sir John——" I stammered, but could get no further.

"Now look here, Cynthia," said my cousin sharply. "I'll have no more of this. It is no business of yours who I see or what I do. Hold your tongue, and don't dare to interfere with me, or back you go to Bruges," and brushing past me into the drawing-room, she smartly closed the door.

My cousin had been with Lord Kinross for about ten minutes when there was a sharp ring at the visitors' bell.

"Mrs. Norton can't see anyone, Skinner," I cautioned the butler, "she's particularly engaged."

"Very well, miss," said Skinner with a grin, and passed on to the door.

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Apparently his representations were unavailing, for the next minute a tall figure passed up the hall.

"Sorry," said a pleasant voice, "but I know Mrs. Norton's at home, and I'm bound to see her."

The intruder was just outside the drawing-room. I sprang forward to detain him.

"You can't go in!" I cried. "Why, Mr. Hope, is that you?"

"Yes, I've come to see your cousin on an affair of some urgency."

"I will tell her. Will you wait a minute?"

"Who is with Mrs. Norton?" he asked. "Oh, I know the question's an impertinence. Still—I *must* speak to her, Miss Hamilton."

"Lord Kinross is with my cousin," I answered stiffly. His manner puzzled me.

"Kinross *here*!" Percival Hope deliberately walked past me, and threw back the door.

My cousin was sitting in her favourite lounge chair by the fire, Lord Kinross bending over her. He was flushed, and his eyes were bright. There was a look of expectancy on Frankie's face turned up to him, her lips half parted as though ready to answer some anticipated question. It seemed to me that, had our entry been delayed ever so little longer, Lord Kinross would have asked that question. As it was the words were stayed.

"Cynthia!" cried my cousin in annoyance. And "Hope!" said Kinross. "What on earth do you want here?"

Percival paid no heed to him, but marched straight up to Frankie. "I'm a late visitor, Mrs. Norton," he said quietly, "but I am charged with a special message from a friend—Miss Mary Vernon."

"Yes? I did not know you were acquainted." Frankie's tone was insolent, her look contemptuous.

"I have known Miss Vernon for years," he said. Then "I should, perhaps, speak to you in private?" he asked slowly.

Frankie flushed, and for a moment seemed to hesitate; she glanced inquiringly at Kinross, but his lordship, leaning stolidly against the mantelpiece, stared into space.

"I have no secrets with you, Mr. Hope," she said at last; "unless Mary charged you to speak to me alone, I don't see the necessity."

"I was not thinking of Miss Vernon," Percival answered quickly. There was a suggestion of unpleasantness in his manner and in his voice.

"Pray deliver your message!" Frankie rose, something of defiance in her attitude.

"You have so great a friendship for Miss Vernon that she feels sure my news will give you pleasure."

"Anything that pleases Mary will gratify me."

Percival bowed.

"Miss Vernon desires that I should tell you this: she has discovered the thief who stole her diamonds. And——" he broke off short.

Frankie, ashen white, was clinging to Lord Kinross for support.

[Next week Percival Hope makes some startling revelations.]

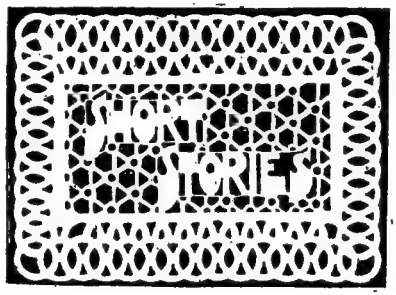
Your Editor Chats.

This week you will find the announcement of the new scheme which I mentioned last week, and I feel sure that, on reading through the conditions, you will agree with me that no simpler method of making a little money could be devised. All you have to do is to send this copy of *Short Stories* to some friend of yours, and then await developments. Your friend will, in turn, forward this copy, after signing it, to a friend of his or hers, so that you do not have to trouble any more about the copy until it is returned to you by the person who last signs his or her name.

If you care to drop a line to the friend to whom you send this copy, pointing out the reason why you forward it, there is no objection to your doing so, and it may certainly carry weight and increase the chances of your succeeding in winning the first prize. If you *do* write a letter don't forget to mention that, in the event of your winning the first prize, your friend will get a sovereign, and in the event of your winning the second prize, your friend will get ten shillings.

The scheme is open for a fortnight, so there is no time to lose. You must post this copy to-night. Don't procrastinate. If you don't do it now you will keep putting it off until it is too late.

The winning design.

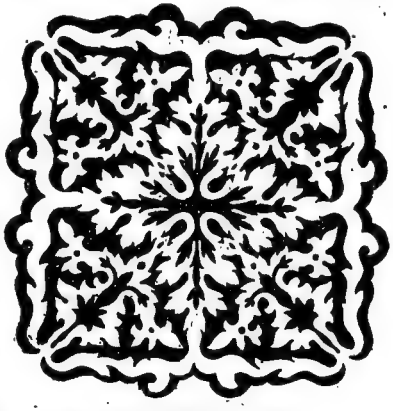


The second best design.

In the letters R, R, E, E, L, O, T, N, I, N, G, A, G, P, E, U, O, U, there are three English words, and for this week's competition I want you to tell me what they are. The reader who first sends in the correct words using up all the letters will receive a **handsome gold-plated pencil-case**, while the twenty readers whose attempts are next received will get consolation gifts of rolled gold hearts and dainty little charms.

Post-cards only, please, and these must reach us not later than the first post on Tuesday morning, July 15th, addressed to the Competition Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C. Post-cards should be marked "Three Words."

I am now able to give you the result of the Design Competition, and to reproduce the three best efforts which I received. The first prize goes to E. Payne, 73 London Road, Clapton, N.E. The second and third awards are taken by Mr. Walter P. Neighbour, 55 Lanercost Road, Tulse Hill Park, S.W., and Mr. Fred Tole, 57 Hope Road, Sale, near Manchester, while the fourth and fifth prizes go to Mrs. J. Millership, 16 Blowman Street, Rugby, and to Mrs. Fisher, 63 Bold Street, Altrincham, Cheshire.



Winner of third prize.

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Extremely Awkward.

"I HEAR there's trouble between you and Miss De Trop." "Yes; everything is declared off." "What was the matter?" "We went into my usual restaurant the other evening, and I ordered lemonade for two. The stupid waiter served it in such a manner that she got hold of my glass, which contained something more."

Her Reason.

"How did you come to marry him? Were you in love with him?" "Oh, no, but another girl was."

Love's Greatest Test.

SHE: "What makes you think he loves me so desperately?" Simplex: "Oh, a thousand things! He always looks pleased, for instance, when you sing and play."

A Poor Money-Maker.

SAMSO: "He is not rich, and yet he makes a great deal more money than he spends." Rodd: "How can that be?" Samso: "He works in the Mint."

Too Early to Tell.

FIRST FAIR ONE: "So Fred and Arthur both proposed to her? Which was the lucky man?" The Other Fair One: "They don't know yet. Fred married her."

Considerate.

LADY (to nursemaid): "Caroline, see you don't let the children sit on the wet grass, they might catch cold. If they are tired you can sit on it yourself and take them on your knee."

One Better.

CRŒSUS: "When I came here I didn't have a penny in my pocket." Midas: "When I came here I didn't even have a pocket." Crœsus (admiringly): "How?" Midas: "I was born here."

Her Real Object.

"SURELY, mademoiselle, you have not come here in search of health?" said a gentleman to a young French lady at Trouville last summer. "Not precisely. To tell the truth, I came here with the object of finding a son-in-law for my mother," was the candid reply.

A Dangerous Tie.

STRAWBER: "Old man, I'm going to take the fatal step to-night, and propose to Miss Quillcutter." Singerly: "Are you going to do it in that necktie?" Strawber: "Why, yes, of course." Singerly: "Then if she says 'Yes,' old fellow, you may be sure it is a case of true love."

How He Knew.

SHE: "That couple in front of us—do you think they are married?" He: "Yes, I am sure they are. They have been married a long time, too." "Why, how do you know?" "Have you noticed that when a pretty girl comes on the stage she always hands the opera glasses over to him?"

Fellow Feeling.

MR. AND MRS. FITTS were out driving. "I wonder," said she, "just what the poor horse's feelings are. It must be just horrid to be driven and dragged about without any idea as to where one is going, except as someone else directs." "I think I can appreciate his feelings," replied Mr. Fitts. "I imagine that he feels just about as I do when you take me out on a shopping trip."

Very Cutting.

ETHEL: "I confess that my sole object in life is to kill time." Maud: "So that he can't tell anyone your age, I suppose!"

He Did His Duty.

HE: "How chilly it is to-night. I could hug a stove, I feel so cold." She: "Is that so? Why, I'm so warm I feel just like a stove."

A Money Hunter.

"AND why, Jennie, did you tell Willie you wouldn't be his little wife?" "'Tause he didn't ast 'till he knowed I had a new sixpence."

To Keep the Balance.

HE: "Is my hat on straight?" She: "Yes. The idea! Why do you ask such a question?" He: "I'm going out in a canoe, and don't want to overbalance it."

The Streets were up.

"I GOT tired of riding home in crowded 'buses, so I bought a bicycle." "So you are going to ride home on that hereafter?" "Well, I don't know. I got it only yesterday, and last night I rode home in an ambulance."

But the Baron Didn't.

MISS BRENTON: "I'll marry you under one condition." Baron Hartz: "I vill accept any condition, mein own." Miss Brenton: "Get Dick Westend's consent. I've been engaged to him for a week, and he might want to keep me."

You Never Know.

JEWELLER: "The inscription you wish engraved on the inside of this ring, I understand, is 'Marcellus to Irene'?" Young Man (with embarrassment): "Yes, that's right. But—er—don't cut the 'Irene' very deep, I may want to use it again."

As Much as He Could Expect.

HE: "What allowance do you think your father ought to make us when we are married?" She: "Well, I think if he makes allowance for your faults he will be doing as much as can be expected of him."

The Marks of Love.

MISS LUVLY: "Do you know Mr. Stevens by sight? I left the verandah after having a little flirtation with him just a moment ago, and now I can't find him anywhere." Miss Waspish: "I saw a man hurrying along with a great pink and white mark on his coat lapel. Perhaps that was he."

It Didn't Work.

YOUNG Mr. Muscle left at a very late hour, and the old man stood at the head of the stairs, chuckling in fiendish glee. Then there was an awful disturbance in the front garden, and the aforesaid old man laughed, "Ha, ha!" Then came the cry of "Help!" "What's wanted?" shouted the aged sinner. A clarion voice rang out, "I want somebody to help me bury a dog!"

Catching an Expression.

PHOTOGRAPHER (to sitter): "I saw you at church last Sunday, Miss Smith." Sitter: "Oh, did you?" Photographer: "Yes, and also your friend, Miss Brown—if you could raise your chin a trifle, thanks—and what an atrocious-looking hat she had on." (After a pause.) "There, Miss Smith, it is over, and I think we have caught a very pleasant expression."

The Drawbacks.

TOM: "Yes, we swore to remain true to each other. Then I went away for a long time." Jack: "And she was always in your thoughts?" Tom: "I thought a good deal of her—I mean I thought of her a good deal." Jack: "And when you met you embraced her fondly, of course?" Tom: "I would probably have done so were it not for our surroundings." Jack: "The encounter was public?" Tom: "Yes, and both her husband and my wife were present."

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The Family Fool.

A Stirring Little Tale of an Election and its Sequel.

"I'VE made up my mind! so there's an end of it!" said Mr. Alderman Gulliver, Drysalter and Magistrate, by virtue of his office, for the City of London, setting down his coffee-cup noisily, and his foot figuratively. "If he ever comes before me for any seditious act, I'll treat him as a rogue and a vagabond! I'll out-Brutus Brutus!"

"Papa, you are very hard on poor Dick! It is not as if he had done anything wrong."

"Not done anything wrong! What do you call his senseless throwing up of a fine position in my business—that he might do what? Mix himself up with a parcel of noisy East End Radicals, who never do any work, but swill beer, and sprout treason, while their wives and children are starving! And you say he hasn't done anything wrong!"

"But, papa, he believes himself to be right in what he is doing."

"Does he? Then he's a bigger fool still! To think that my son—my only son!—with advantages greater than any nine out of ten, should deliberately set himself to thwart me in this way. It's a pity he has that five hundred a year of his mother's; without it, he'd be forced to come to me, and study my wishes."

"Well, papa, Gerald says that——"

"Ah! *there's* a young fellow of a thousand for you! Gerald Haynes would never have had my consent to marry you, had I not been convinced of his good and respectable principles."

Mr. Gulliver was so filled with admiration for his future son-in-law, for himself, and for the said good and respectable principles, common, as he fondly imagined, to both of them, that he quite failed to notice his daughter Mabel's badly-concealed expression of mirthful dissent.

"I was going to say," she observed soberly, "that Gerald has heard some news of Dick lately."

"Nothing to the young rascal's credit, I'll be bound!"

"Oh! I don't know! Falling in love isn't so very discreditable a proceeding; at least it has been more or less the fashion from Adam's time until now."

"Falling in love! Dick! Some factory girl or bargee's daughter, I suppose!"

"Well, I do not think our Dick would look quite so low as that; although I don't see why a factory girl or a bargee's daughter shouldn't be as good as—well—as Lady Marjorie Underwood, for instance."

This was probing the Alderman in a peculiarly sore spot.

"You're as bad as your brother, girl, every whit as bad. Lady Marjorie, indeed! The—the daughter of a hundred Earls! Poor the last two or three of 'em, I grant, but the blood was and is there—and it's the blood that's the thing! The blood that tells!"

"Oh! I am not belittling Lady Marjorie; I like her. She's an especial friend of mine."

"I had set my heart upon a match between her and Dick!" went on the Alderman. "Money and blood! But she wouldn't look at the young fool now!"

"Perhaps she wouldn't, for Marjorie has, I know, set *her* heart upon mating with a wise man."

"Sensible girl! sensible girl! But how is Gerald's canvassing getting on? It's a pity that he is putting up for an East End constituency, even though it be in the Conservative interest."

"I fancy that he has made an advance during this past week," replied Mabel. "But I hear his voice in the drawing-room. I knew he was coming here early on his way east; but not quite so early as this."

She tripped out and ran upstairs.

"Gerald," she said, with a roguish smile, and after the usual lover's greetings, "Papa has been going on terribly about poor Dick—it is a shame!"

"Yes it is—rather—but we mustn't forget, dear, that your father is deeply disappointed in Dick. I am sadly afraid, too, that, were he not my old college chum, the prince of good fellows, and—my Mab's brother, I should be sorely tempted to regard him in anything but a friendly light."

"Why?"

"Why? Why, because he is about the worst enemy—politically—that I have in Whitechapel, and because, unless the gods are very good to me, he is the one man in all the world who will be responsible for my defeat, should I lose the day."

"Are you sure of this, Gerald?"

"I am. He is moving Heaven and earth now, in the organisation of a monster meeting, to be held somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tower Hill. This is to be a decisive demonstration against my candidature, and I am only afraid that it will end in riot and trouble for Dick."

"Are you going eastwards now?" she asked.

"Yes, I am going to try and see Dick, in the hope that I may persuade him, if possible, to adopt a more moderate course."

"Will you take me with you?"

"Do you think, Mabel, that it would be advisable?"

"I have my reasons—strong reasons, for wishing to go."

"Come, then, by all means, dear! But you'll find it anything but a pleasure-jaunt."

Seeking her father again in the dining-room, Mabel made her petition for leave of absence.

"Gerald will take care of me—and—and I want to go! So you must let me!"

"Well, if you must—you must, I suppose. But tell Gerald to be sure and not to take you anywhere near the scene of action."

"Trust Gerald for that, papa! He is nearly as bad as you are in thinking me to be china—of the easily-breakable sort."

* * * * *

Everywhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the morrow's contest, there were outward and visible signs of what might then be expected. Not that there was much noise or disturbance, it was simply that printer's-ink, in every colour of the rainbow, flowed and overflowed from wall, and hoarding, and window.

But there was another, and, to the intelligent spectator, more portentous spirit abroad—a spirit that whispered in alleyways, and at street corners; a spirit that was wholly ignorant, and might, therefore, be wholly dangerou .

When Gerald Haynes and Mabel left the train at Aldgate, and faced the malodorous shamble-stores of "Butchers' Row," the pavements of the big thoroughfare seemed alive with the threatening silence of the coming storm.

Knots of two or three, or of half-a-dozen denizens of the district, stood about at every vantage point, discussing in low tones, some evidently weighty matter. Flitting from group to group were a few better-dressed men, whose mission it seemed to be to keep popular interest in the subject under discussion up to standard point.

At the corner of Commercial Street the knots of men appeared to crystallise, the police good-humouredly taking little notice, so long as the road traffic was not interfered with or impeded.

"Gerald, there's Dick!" exclaimed Mabel, as they were preparing to cross the road.

She was pointing excitedly towards a tall man in a coarse tweed suit and a golf cap of the same colour.

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The man was talking to a lady, who had just descended f om a hansom, that waited by the kerbside.

Tall, dark, and stately-looking, and dressed in well-fitting tailor-made dress and jacket, the latter was rapidly exciting in the male East End mind undisguised admiration for her aristocratically handsome face.

"By Jove! So it is!" replied Gerald Haynes, "and if I'm not very much mistaken, the lady who is engaging his attention is Lady Marjorie!"

Pushing a way for himself and Mabel through the fast-increasing crowd, he soon came abreast of the man in the tweed suit and his companion.

Their eyes met simultaneously, the whole four of them, quite oblivious of the comments of the man in the street, giving themselves up unreservedly to the pleasure of the unexpected meeting.

Unfortunately, Richard Gulliver, the Socialistic pioneer, the leader of men, the man who, it was rumoured, had given up a fortune to help his East End brother, was recognised by an enthusiastic follower.

The news spread like wildfire. In an instant Dick and his friends were hemmed in so closely, that to get clear of the press seemed an absolute impossibility.

Now, Dick was a giant among men; stood, indeed, Saul-like, above his fellows from the shoulders upward.

This fact stood him in good stead now, inasmuch as it enabled him to look round for a means of escape from his admirers.

On the side of the Mile End Road where they stood, was the entrance to a large hall, wedged in between two shop fronts.

It was in this hall that the meeting referred to by Gerald Haynes was to be held at two o'clock on that day.

Whis ering to Gerald to take quick advantage of his next move, Dick squared his shoulders, and elbowed himself backwards towards the door of the hall. Putting Mabel and Lady Marjorie before him, and thus between himself and Dick, Gerald followed up, step by step, the former's retreat doorwards.

The moment Dick Gulliver reached the door, he, deftly taking a large key from his pocket, felt behind him for the keyh le, and before the crowd could realise that their idol had disappeared, he and his friends were safely inside the closed door of the hall.

Suddenly there was a sound as of an ever-nearing roar of a human Niagara! Ten thousand throats seemed splitting—ten thousand voices seemed shrieking in hideous discord in the street outside.

"Follow me!" cried Dick, as he sprang up a steep flight of stairs to the left of the entry. This brought them on to a landing, the window of which overlooked the main road.

Looking down, they saw a huge seething crowd, principally men, frantically struggling to reach one objective point—the entrance to the hall.

Scattered here and there throughout the throng, and hanging, Uh an-like, on to the fringe of it, were individuals whose political opinions were manifestly not in accord with those of the great majority. These indulged in vexatious wordy warfare with the "reds," who, roused at last to frenzy, took the matter into their own hands, and started a campaign of fist and foot reprisals.

"Dick," said Gerald Haynes, "you have let loose the flood! But can you stop it?"

With that, he threw up the lower sash, leant both his hands on the window-sill, and made as if to speak.

"Are you men or brutes?" he cried, in stentorian tones. "I neve taught you to tear each other's throats! You are a disgrace to the cause you profess to champion! Ah! you coward"—as a stone, flung from the centre of the crowd, struck him on the forehead. "You are as fickle as women, without woman's excuse! From this hour I renounce yo i and all yo r works! Lead yourselves, and see where you wi l arrive! Henceforth, I go to the Gentiles!"

There was an attempt at silence during this speech, but with the last word, the uproar renewed itself with tenfold o ce.

Mabel and Lady Marjorie were too terror-stricken to speak, although the latter, directly Dick started to address the mob, drew nearer to him. When he was struck, she quietly produced her handkerchief and wiped the blood that streamed from a nasty wound in his forehead.

In ten minutes the police arrived in sufficient force to disperse the crowd.

An inspector and two constables demanded admi tance at the hall door in the King's name.

Dick went down with the keeper of the hall and answered the summons.

"Is your name Richard Gulliver?"

"It is."

"Then I hold a warrant for your arrest," said the inspecto-, "for inciting to sedition the King's subjects, and for conspiring against His Majesty's peace."

Gerald Haynes, with the two girls, accompanied the prisoner to the Guildhall, where the sitting Alderman happened to be Horace Gulliver, Esq.

A few formal preliminaries and Dick, Lady Marjorie's handkerchief as a bandage still round his head, stepped quietly into the dock and faced his father.

There was hardly a soul in the court but knew the history of the Alderman and his son. It was common property.

"Gaoler! The prisoner's name."

"Rich—Richard Gulliver—your worship, begging your worship's pardon."

"You needn't beg my pardon! What's the charge?"

"Inciting to sedition, and conspiring against the King's peace, your worship."

"Have you anything to say, prisoner?"

"I did my best to stop it," was the reply.

"'Um. Didn't find it so easy as egging 'em on to it."

"No, I am sorry to say."

Two policemen and a witness who professed to having heard the prisoner the night before uttering at a meeting violent threats against the Government, having given evidence, the Alderman, in the absence of any rebutting test mony, expressed his intention of dealing with the case a week from that date.

"I should like to say a word," interrupted Gerald Haynes, standing up in the well of the court.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Gulliver, looking *through* his future son-in-law as if not seeing him. "What have you to say? Is it anything in the prisoner's favour?"

"As the Conservative candidate for the district, I may perhaps be permitted to say, that, being present the whole time, I saw nothing—practically nothing, which could in any way support a charge of sedition. More than that, the prisoner, whom I have personally known and esteemed for many years, acted in a manly way to quell the disturbance; so much so, that, should I be elected to-morrow, I shall regard his action as having materially contributed to my success. I may add that I am prepared to offer bail to any amount for Mr. Richard Gulliver."

Gerald Haynes, when he sat down, distinctly felt a warm little hand steal into his, and though he looked for no reward, his sweetheart's appreciation was very sweet to him.

"Well, I shall remand the prisoner for a week, and shall require one substantial bail to the amount of a thousand pounds."

Needless to say that it was immediately forthcoming.

But Dick never appeared on the remand, other than to be at once discharged, for, in the meanwhile, the Alderman had received an intimation from the Home Office that his conduct savoured largely of the ridiculous, and that his granting a warrant at all for his son's arrest on such slight grounds, placed him in rather an awkward position.

Poor man! he had a peculiarly warm time of it at home, what with one and another; and he was not really comfortable till the day of the double wedding; when Lady Marjorie, to the old man's great delight, took Dick for better and for worse; and then the new Conservative member for Whitechapel and Mabel Gulliver followed their friend's very good example.

E. Ralph.

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YOU CAN BEGIN TO-DAY.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

For New Readers.

A BELT full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude.

Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, determines to prove the latter's guilt.

Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!" But Revelle, by sheer force of will, compels her to acknowledge her mistake.

In the meanwhile, Scarsdale, who has got into trouble for attacking a warder who jested with him about Esther, is taken seriously ill, and placed in the prison hospital, where he succeeds in writing a letter to Esther and giving it to a convict named Ben Needham, who has finished his sentence and has promised to deliver it to Esther upon his release. He accomplishes his mission a week or so later.

At about this time Esther and Mr. Crump are walking together when they observe Vance about to throw herself in the reservoir. Crump stops her just in time—he and Esther taking her back to The Woodlands. Later on Revelle and Benny drive up in a dogcart, and suddenly, while talking to Esther, Revelle turns deadly pale. Crump is standing by, and quickly sees the reason for his emotion. Vance is approaching. She goes straight up to Revelle: It is a critical moment, but once more Revelle's iron will wins the day. Again apologising for her mistake in calling Revelle her husband, she allows herself to be led away. Later on she is placed in the county asylum.

A charity concert is now announced, in which both Esther and Benny are billed to take part. Revelle, of course, is present; so also is Mr. Crump. It is while returning from this concert that Revelle proposes to Esther but is refused.

The great balloon incident now approaches. There is to be a grand *fête* in Lord Normanhurst's grounds, the chief and closing event being a balloon ascent by Mr. Seaton Revelle. Everything goes well till two horsemen arrive with the news that Vance has escaped from the asylum. Crump advises them to go straight to the reservoir.

CHAPTER XXII.

Escaped.

CRUMP'S advice was taken. One man dismounted his smoking horse, the other pelted forward at a break-neck pace, bound for the reservoir. Crump was looking seriously distressed as he turned to where Mrs. Cobb and Pollie were standing.

"Mrs. Cobb," he said, "this is very sad, this. I'm going to ask you to excuse me. I don't suppose that I shall do any good, but I must help look for this poor woman. Now, if you will just go into the grounds, I shall hope to join you later."

He nodded to the two constables, and hurried off, bent on taking a short cut to the reservoir. From his previous experience of Vance, he told himself that she was far more likely to be found there than in the grounds. He reached the reservoir to find the asylum attendant already there; but no sign of Vance. The little man at once made for the spot where, when in company with Esther, he had seen Vance standing on the edge, staring down into the water. He stooped down and examined the ground.

"I don't think that she has been here!" he said to the attendant.

"Well," answered the man, "I don't quite see how you can tell that by just examining one particular spot for foot-marks!"

"A poor creature bent on suicide would, I fancy, make a direct line for the water. In particular if she were conscious of pursuit. The bridle-path is the only approach to the water from the north, the asylum side. But I may be wrong. I am open to correction!"

Crump was a stranger to the attendant.

"You might be a detective from the way you talk!"

Crump shook his head, and handed the man a card—the "Penworthy" card, on which was inscribed "Landscape Gardener and Horticultural Specialist."

"I am interested in the poor woman, because I found her that morning when she wandered here. If, as a private individual, I might make a suggestion, I should communicate at once with the police at Ashbrook, and ask that a man might be told off to keep an eye on this reservoir. It is possible that she may arrive here later. And in the meantime I should be very pleased to wait here. I think it would be as well!"

"Thank you. Much obliged!"

The man rode off. Crump remained, staring meditatively at the water, occasionally shaking his head. He had looked forward to a day's enjoyment with Mrs. Cobb and Pollie, and the episode had cast a shadow. On the arrival of a policeman in plain clothes, he returned to the grounds.

The balloon had ascended again with another load of passengers. Crump glanced up at it and the figure seated in the rigging.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "if you've heard yet of this poor creature's escape! I may be wrong in my estimate of your character, but I look upon you as a heartless, cold-blooded scoundrel, Mr. Seaton Revelle, exceptionally so, in fact. And I do hope that sooner or later—preferably sooner—I shall have the supreme satisfaction——"

The stern look that had momentarily crossed the little man's face melted into a smile.

"He's a blackguard; but his impertinence tickles me!"

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

He had caught sight of Mr. Faversham. Lady Eliza Normanhurst was with him, and had taken his arm. She had been charmed with his performance at the concert, and was he not of the Norfolk-Faversham stock? It was rather an ordeal for Benny. "Upper circles," as he put it, "were not much in his line; and he was uncertain on matters of etiquette. It was a case of trusting to luck. It was all very well for the Marquis. He took to the upper circles as a duck takes to water."

"You're not a balloonist?" said Lady Normanhurst.

"No!" said Benny, "I prefer to have my feet upon my native heath; feel far more at home on *terra cotta!*"

Benny wondered why Lady Normanhurst laughed. He was under the belief that *terra cotta* and *terra firma* meant the same thing; but having the reputation of being a funny man, his ignorance passed for funniness. It happens so sometimes.

At that moment they were joined by Lord Normanhurst.

"I've just heard," he said, "that there's been an escape from the asylum. There's just a chance that the poor woman may have made her way here, and got into the grounds with the crowd."

"Who is she?" asked his wife.

"That unfortunate servant of Mansfield's who so suddenly went out of her mind."

Benny thought of the Marquis. Revelle had assured him that he had never set eyes upon the woman before that evening when he was dining with the Mansfield's; but, for all that, Benny had been haunted by certain doubts on the matter. He was, as Crump had put it, a blackguard; but he was not entirely without a conscience, and there was a humane side to his character. He had no scruples on the subject of cracking a crib, if the affair ended there; but it was another thing when it entailed undeserved suffering on innocent people. Much as he admired the Marquis, and very much under his thumb as he was, there were moments when the relations between the two men were liable to be strained; and, moreover, Benny was inclined to be jealous of the silent Railton whose praises Revelle had a way of singing, and who was completely in his confidence.

The balloon was being hauled down. After the disembarkation of the passengers, Revelle himself sprang out. Since the rejection of his proposal, he had met Esther frequently. He had behaved as if no such thing had taken place. Afterwards he had told himself that he had acted prematurely; but he flattered himself complacently that Esther's rejection of his advances was half-hearted; that it was not so much the remembrance of Alec Scarsdale, but rather the worldly dread of what people might say. He was hopelessly out in his calculations, and his error was largely due to his infinite belief in himself. Besides himself and Esther, only one person (not counting Benny) knew of the proposal—Crump. Esther had told him. She had also told him of the letter that had reached her from Alec through that rough diamond, Ben Needham. The little man had grown right into her heart. She had come to look upon him in the light of a second father. There was a delicacy about him, a certain tenderness, that made her feel somehow that she could tell him things which she would not for worlds mention to anyone else.

The *fête* provided many attractions; but the balloon was the greatest, and Seaton Revelle undoubtedly the hero of the hour. He was rapidly becoming a very popular person in the neighbourhood.

Many eyes followed him as, having left the captive balloon in charge of some attendants, he made his way through the crowds to Lord Normanhurst.

"Just taking a bit of an easy!" he said, "I have been making money fast. Normanhurst, you must come up with me next time. I'm thankful that there's no wind to speak of, and what little there is looks like dropping. A captive balloon's no good in a wind."

Lady Normanhurst had carried off Benny to a small tent where a lady of title, who had made a study of palmistry, was reading characters and foretelling the future.

"Now," said Lady Normanhurst, as the lady palmist took one of Benny's hands in her own, and started to examine the lines. "I'm going to hear your true character, Mr. Faversham!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Benny to himself; and, after it was all over, again to himself, "Heaven be thanked! Not a bit like it!"

Lord Normanhurst accompanied Revelle back to the balloon. Some stir was created when it was known that his Lordship was going to make an ascent.

"By the way," he said, as they neared the car, "have you heard of this escape from the asylum? That poor woman, Vance."

A momentary shadow darkened Revelle's face.

"No, I hadn't heard. When—when did she get away?"

"Some time this morning. There's a rumour that she may be somewhere here in the grounds. I trust not. She's only dangerous to herself, they say; but if the rumour gets about, I'm afraid it will cast a gloom over the proceedings, and so far everything has been going splendidly!"

A cheer went up as Lord Normanhurst climbed into the car. Revelle shouted out an order. The engine started to pay out the wire cable. The balloon rose up. Presently Revelle signalled down. The engine stopped. He took a pair of field glasses from a case, and handed them to Lord Normanhurst. After sweeping the horizon and the crowd below, he handed them back. Revelle, having adjusted the focus, glanced away to the distant County asylum. His face hardened a little. He had fancied that she was safe enough there. Then he, too, scanned the crowd below.

Was it possible that she was somewhere down there? Was it possible, that before the day was out, he would have to face another such ordeal as he had gone through that morning outside John Mansfield's house?

Lord Normanhurst was becoming accustomed to his novel situation.

"I say, Revelle, would it be possible for you to make your free ascent a little later—after dusk in fact. You see, we are going to illuminate the grounds, and I've been wondering if you could manage to blaze off a firework or something when you were up aloft!"

Revelle was still staring through the field-glasses.

"Well, yes. I could go up just before dusk, and show a coloured light or something, don't you know!"

Was she somewhere down below—this woman who was his lawful wife?

He cursed the asylum people under his breath. What had they been doing to let her escape?

Where was she?

* * * * * * *

"Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon!
Flying up sky-high, boys,
Trying to reach the moon!"

The words, crooned out in a weird monotone, came from behind a great clump of gorse where a woman, her dull eyes dilated and fastened on what, in the distance, looked like a tiny globule suspended in mid-air, crouched—a lonely, hidden figure on the desolate common that stretched away on all sides. Presently she rose up, glanced round her furtively; then crept away to another clump, a little further along, and, crouching down again, crooned out the same refrain.

"Is it Jim up there?" she whispered. "It reminds me of old times. He loved me for a little time; then grew tired. But I love him still, so much that I won't betray him. But, oh, how he looked at me! Those eyes of his, that old hard stare!"

She shivered; then, straightening up again and glancing round as though she were afraid of pursuit, she crept forward to another clump. Her movements were those of a hunted creature.

"He wants me out of the way, wants to be free to marry her. Shall I go to her, tell her that he'll only break her heart as he broke mine? Warn her against his handsome face?"

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For a moment the dull eyes lighted up with a look of jealousy, but it flickered out. She sank down on to the turf, and buried her face in her arms.

"They would only take me back, and laugh at me. I'm mad. No, I'll wait till the darkness comes, and then I'll go to the water. Rest's waiting for me there, looking up from under the water, and beckoning, always beckoning, and holding out its arms to me!"

When the sun, like a great red ball of fire, seemed to be resting on the line of the horizon, the demented woman was sitting in the shadow of the gorse, her knees drawn up to her chin, waiting for the darkness, and again crooning to herself the old refrain.

The great red ball sank out of sight, leaving the sky a crimson-yellow hue that softened into greyness. Then heavy, ominous-looking clouds crept up over the horizon-ridge.

"Hooray—hooray—hooray!"

The distant cheers stole over the deserted common like a faint whisper.

In the far-away grounds a great crowd had gathered round the balloon. The cable that hitherto had held it captive had been detached. A number of men were holding on to the car that was heavily weighted with ballast. The grounds were beginning to twinkle with fairy lights.

Seaton Revelle had entered the car. The cheers had been for him. The wind had dropped completely.

"Can't quite say" he called out to Lord Normanhurst, "where I shall come to ground. But if I can strike the current I want I shall probably drop on to Aversham Common—plenty of room there!"

"I shouldn't like to be going up!" said Pollie to Crump, whose hand she was holding.

"Nor should I, Pollie!" answered the little man; then he was seized with a violent fit of sneezing that necessitated an immediate recourse to his handkerchief. It was quite a prolonged fit, and for some little time his face was completely buried in his handkerchief.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Cobb, who was on his other side, "I'm afraid that you've caught cold, Mr. Penworthy!"

"I'm afraid that I have!"

But, as a matter of fact, he had not caught cold; but had caught sight of the face of a man who had edged his way through the crowd, and was standing near him—a man with an expressionless countenance and rather fishy eyes, Railton, Mr. Seaton Revelle's valet. Only when he had pushed his way still further ahead, and was well in front of him, did Crump cease to blow his nose.

"Hooray!"

"O-o-h!" cried Pollie, "it's going up, going up!"

Straight as a die, amidst ringing cheers, the balloon shot up into the evening sky that was growing more grey and dark with every moment.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Crump as he stared up watching the balloon growing smaller and smaller, "I'm sorry. This rain will spoil the evening for many people, I'm afraid!"

A drop of heavy rain had pattered down on to his face. It was a prelude of a downpour, so heavy that a few moments later there was a general stampede for the many marquees and tents that dotted the grounds.

Had the evening been clear, the balloon would have been distinctly visible, but the blackness of banking rain-clouds darkened the sky.

"As long as there's no lightning," said John Mansfield to Esther, "Revelle will be all right. I think we are in for a regular downpour. I'm glad that I ordered the carriage early. But I'm sorry. I'm afraid the evening is spoilt!"

Several letters awaited the banker when he reached home. One of them was from an old friend.

"Esther," he said, "a letter from Sawyer. Most kind of him. He suggests that we should pay him a visit at his place at Gurlstone Bay, while the summer's still at its best. He's got a yacht down there, and proposes a coasting cruise. I think we ought to go!"

He stroked her dark hair tenderly.

"I don't think my little girl is quite looking herself. Yes, I think I'll write and accept for both of us!"

"I think I'd rather stop here, father. We only seem to have just come back."

The banker shook his head.

"No, Esther, I shall accept!"

Esther still hesitated. Warham was the scene of action, the field on which she felt the battle was being fought; yet she was conscious of a longing to get away for a little while, away from that man whose almost daily presence sometimes became well-nigh unbearable.

"Father, will you give me till to-morrow to make up my mind?"

She meant to consult Crump.

"Very well, Esther, you shall sleep upon it!"

That night, when alone in her room, Esther drew back the curtains and stared out into the darkness. The rain was still pelting down steadily. Her heart was heavy within her. She had heard of Vance's escape. Where was she? What had happened to the poor woman?

Then her thoughts changed into another channel. The silence of the darkened room was broken by a woman's voice that cried aloud—

"Alec, my love, my love, if I could only see you, speak with you!"

Silence followed for a while.

Then came the cry of many men and women—the cry of the captive craving for freedom, of the lover for his love, of genius unrecognised. A cry that has often winged its way to the throne of the Omnipotent!

"Oh, God, how long, how long!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Jim!"

Above, moon and stars were shining out; below, what looked like a billowy silvered sea; below that, darkness and rain. The balloon, with its solitary occupant was in the upper heavens, above the clouds that blackened the world below. With some men, the awful loneliness of space, the myriad constellations, the baseless, silvered cloud-ocean below, would have conjured up a deep sense of awe, a feeling of one's own micrososmic pettiness, a breathless wonder at the mysterious vastness of the universe!

Revelle, his coat-collar upturned, peered over the edge of the basket-car. The vastness, the immensity of it, all made no impression upon him.

"Curse the night!" he muttered, "I had calculated on a clear evening. Once I drop through those clouds I shall be in pitch darkness. I haven't the vaguest notion where I am. It will be all a matter of guess-work!"

He glanced at the barometer. It was possible to read it by the clear moonlight.

"Nearly four thousand feet up, I shall have to chance my luck! Goodness only knows where the currents have been drifting me to. There's nothing to gauge my position by!"

He pulled the valve-rope. There was a hissing sound of escaping gas. The balloon dropped downwards towards the fantastic, silvery billows below. A moment later it was shrouded in a cold, damp, black mist. Moon and stars were blotted out. Then the mist gave place to an intense, but clear darkness and a steady, pelting, rain. The balloon had dropped through the clouds. With a sound like the *frou-frou* of a society lady's skirt, the balloon's silken envelope swished under the lash of the water.

The sound of escaping gas ceased. There seemed no breeze, but an imperceptible current was bearing the balloon along.

Revelle was staring down. Immediately below was darkness, but here and there in the distance lights were twinkling out. One set of lights might have been a pattern picked out by glow-worms. Even as he stared down light after light went out.

"The grounds," muttered Revelle. "They've given it up as a bad business and are putting out the lights, or the

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

rain's doing it for them. Reckon by the position of those lights, and the darkness below, that I must be about over the common!"

He swung overboard a three-pronged anchor. The balloon tilted over to one side, then he opened the valve again.

Again the hissing sound of gas and a gentle, downward motion.

"Thank Heaven for that!"

The continuous cloud-bank overhead had suddenly rifted. The moonlight, struggling through, illumined the drifting balloon with a pale light. Revelle could almost distinguish the nature of the ground beneath.

"If it will only last I shall be able to see what I am doing. I'm over the common right enough!"

Down, gently down, and drifting slowly along! So close to the ground now that the trailing anchor almost brushed the top of the gorse. The pale light of the moon was still holding good.

The valve was closed again. Revelle, his hand on the rope, was leaning half out of the car watching his opportunity.

Suddenly he saw a figure rise up, more like a ghost than human being, from out the shadow of a clump of gorse.

"Jim, Jim," crooned up a voice, "is that you? Have you come for me?"

"My God!" hissed out Revelle.

The figure was no longer visible, hidden beneath the car. The next moment there was a jerk as if the anchor had clawed the ground; the car heeled over to one side, but went on drifting, dragged down at an angle.

A woman was clinging to the anchor, being dragged along, her feet sometimes clear of, sometimes scraping the ground.

Revelle relaxed hold of the valve rope, sprang across the car, and stared down, the moonlight was upon the clinging figure the pale, upturned face.

It was the face of his mad wife!

"Jim!" —the panting words reached him—"Up, up, up, let's go up together! Up—away—from the cruel world—to Heaven—to rest!"

The man's face was an ashy colour now. With a swift movement he dashed the sweat from off his forehead, then stooped, snatched up something, and heaved it overboard—a bag of ballast.

The balloon shot up.

"Jim!"

He stooped again. A moment later another bag of ballast struck the common with a dull thud. He peered over the edge of the car. The moonlight was full upon the white, upturned face of the mad woman as she swung along through the air.

"Jim!"

His wife! Cruelty, terror, was shining from his eyes, but not mercy!

Then, as suddenly as it had opened, the rift in the cloud-bank closed up, and all was darkness again and rain.

"Jim!"

A third bag of ballast slipped through the air, and struck the ground with a dull thud. Then a current of wind caught the balloon and drove it towards Warham reservoir.

The basket car still listed heavily to one side.

Then, suddenly, it righted itself, and the balloon, relieved of a heavy weight, shot upward like an arrow!

The man in the car was the grey colour of death now. His teeth were chattering. Clutching the edge with a shaking hand, he forced himself to peer over. Once again the cloud-bank rifted, and for a brief moment the fickle moon showed her face. Something shimmered below coldly. Water!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Scarsdale is Transferred. "Change 'ere for Gurston Bay!"

"Why am I to go before the Governor?" asked Scarsdale wearily. "Have I been reported again? Does it mean another dose of punishment cells?"

The warder, who had replaced Pettigrew, had entered Scarsdale's cell with the information that he was to go before the Governor. He was cast in a different mould from Pettigrew, and was friendly-disposed towards his charges.

"No; it's not that, this time. But the Visiting Director's here, and the papers have been made out transferring you to some other establishment—you'll know which, soon enough."

"Transferred?"

"Yes; it's a little way they've got with fractious prisoners. The Governor was fined fifty pounds on account of Gentleman Jack's escape, and he doesn't want to lose another. He's a bit anxious, and won't be sorry to have you off his hands."

Scarsdale smiled grimly, and glanced down at his leg-chains.

The warder's statement was confirmed when Scarsdale was brought before the Governor and the Visiting Director. He was formally told that he was to be transferred to another convict establishment.

A prisoner under Special Orders is neither allowed to write nor receive any letters. But Scarsdale was informed that on his arrival at his new quarters he would be allowed to write one letter informing his friends of his transfer.

This in itself was something. When he was back again in his cell, Scarsdale felt a feeling akin to excitement. Any change was welcome after the terrible monotony of the past, although he knew that he was to be transferred to a Public Works Prison that had a notorious reputation for the stringency of its discipline. He had met prisoners who had "done time" at Wrackam Convict Prison, and they had never spoken of it but to revile it. One of them had called it "the hell of English prisons." Situated close to the banks of a great river, the prisoners were mostly employed in building fortresses, docks, and basins.

That evening when the warder entered his cell, he told him that several others besides himself were to be transferred to Wrackam. He would have companions on the journey.

Scarsdale slept but little that night; and when he did snatch a few moments, he obtained no rest. The same wild dreams of escape tortured him—vivid dreams that haunted him when awake.

He was up and dressed and feverishly pacing his dark cell long before the prison bell jangled out its harsh note. He climbed to the iron bars and watched the grey light of dawn spread across the moor. Recollections crowded through his brain, all grim and dark. What might be in store for him in the future, he did not know; but he thanked God that he was leaving that horrible place with its rankling associations of injustice.

When the bell rang out he remembered how, when first hearing its notes, it had chilled him with the hopelessness of despair. He listened to the slamming of the doors, the rattle of feet along the corridors, and the cries of the warders as they shouted out "Brooms in!" How strange it had all seemed to him at first—how horribly familiar it had all become now!

Silently he took in his breakfast—an eight-ounce loaf of bread, sodden with some gruel that had been slopped over it, and the pint of "skilly." He had scarcely tasted his first prison breakfast; now he devoured it ravenously. He was marched down into the receiving ward. Besides some half-a-dozen other convicts, the Governor, the Chief Warder, and a small crowd of principal warders and warders were present. His letters were taken from him, and he was marched into an adjoining room, where he was stripped to the skin and thoroughly searched. Returning to the ward, his name, sentence, and official number were called out, and he surrendered up his official ticket. The identification of each convict having been assured, the little gang was then marched off to the chain-room, more commonly called the jeweller's shop.

Scarsdale was still wearing his leg-chains, but they did not save him from being handcuffed. There were seven convicts, all told, and, when each man had been handcuffed, they were formed into two groups of four and three, fastened

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together by a long steel chain attached to the handcuffs of the left hands.

Then each man was given a haversack containing a couple of eight-ounce loaves, a small piece of cold beef, and some quarter of a pound of cheese. A long day's journey lay before them, and they were not expected to reach Wrackam till late that night.

A clumsy-looking omnibus was drawn up in the parade-ground; the men entered, two warders with them. Two other warders took up their positions on the steps outside, while another climbed up beside the driver. They were all armed with cutlasses, and carried revolvers in their pockets.

Once beyond the confines of the prison-walls, the convicts began to talk to one another in low whispers. The warders did not attempt to prevent them. So long as the gloomy blot on the moor remained in sight, Scarsdale felt compelled by a strange fascination to watch it. He gave a deep sigh of relief—why he could not have explained—when at last it disappeared from view. The road was hilly, and once the men were ordered out to walk.

To Scarsdale it was like a brief glimpse of freedom. He forgot his hideous dress, the fetters and handcuffs, as he tramped up the hill, drinking in the invigorating air. There was a wild, rugged beauty about the surrounding country. There was no prison, no civil guard, no sentinel-box in view now to mar the effect.

Even the warders seemed to have relaxed, for they did not prevent conversation, and occasionally joined in themselves.

"Bust me tight," exclaimed one convict, a wizen-faced, keen-eyed little Cockney, who had been sentenced to five years for being found with his hand in somebody else's pocket, "bust me tight if this ain't a reg'lar Heaster Monday Bank 'Oliday picnic!"

"Yes," said one of the warders, "only there aren't no pockets to be picked round about here, 564!"

Whereat most of the others laughed heartily, 564 included. It was the laugh and the jest that recalled Scarsdale to himself. It grated upon his nerves. It brought him down again to a sordid level.

The hill had been climbed, and, once again within the vehicle, Scarsdale took stock of his comrades. Though they had all come from the same prison, none of them were known to him. He himself composed one of the little gang of four—each man of a different and distinct type. Next to him was an old man, grey-faced and haggard; there was a weary, broken aspect about the droop of his head. The features were refined and intellectual; there was a deep pathos in their expression of passive suffering. His neighbour was the little Cockney, sharp as a needle, full of native wit, and utterly devoid of conscience. He had picked pockets before he came to prison, and he meant to start picking them again as soon as he had served his time. The fourth man was of a tall and commanding appearance; he had been a promoter of bogus companies in his day; he had ruined homes and robbed hundreds of their hard-earned savings. He had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. It was said that when he came out he would be immensely rich. The spoil that he had amassed had been transferred to someone else's banking account before the crash came.

The other little group of three was composed of a man who had been sent to prison for manslaughter; a lad of twenty who had fallen into the hands of racing sharps, and had stolen money to pay his debts; and the head of a notorious gang of London coiners.

Such were Scarsdale's travelling companions. It was the man next to him who interested him most. He glanced at his badge. He was serving a sentence of fifteen years. He wondered if he would live through it, and what his crime had been.

But his thoughts were temporarily distracted when the omnibus entered the outskirts of Plymtown. Every convict face was pressed against the windows—to obtain a glance of the free and outer world.

It was so long since Scarsdale had seen anything but convict-clad men and uniformed officials, that the sight of men and

The Most Singular Town in England.

Berwick is the most singular town in the British dominions inasmuch as it is really both a town and a country to itself. Elwick, a neighbouring place, has recently become almost equally interesting on account of a remarkable cure worked there by Bile Beans. Mrs. Matthewson, the wife of an Elwick farmer, related the facts of the case as follows to a "Berwickshire News" reporter:—"My daughter Mary suffered from anæmia for many months. The illness came on by slow degrees, so that for some time no one regarded it as being serious. But as she grew more feeble, we became alarmed. She could not take her usual food, complained of a weak stomach, seldom had any appetite, and became awfully emaciated. This went on for months. I tried several vaunted remedies, but they proved worthless. Then a doctor prescribed for her, and attended her. She got better for a while, but ultimately went back to her old condition. The doctor said she was bloodless, and attended her for several weeks.

She was then ordered to have some teeth drawn, which had a good effect, but the improvement was again merely temporary. Seeing an advertisement of Bile Beans we resolved to get a box, and give them a trial. The effects of the first box were most gratifying. Indeed, before it was finished, there was a noticeable improvement in her condition. By perseverance with the Beans, she grew stronger bit by bit every day. Her appetite increased, and very soon she was better in many ways than she had been before. To-day, thanks entirely to the Beans, she has been quite cured, and both looks and feels remarkably well and strong." The remedy which worked this cure is the world's specific for anæmia, debility, headache, lassitude, weakness after influenza, indigestion, female ailments, and all liver and kidney disorders. Of all chemists for one and three-halfpence or two and nine per box. Never sold loose. The above is but one instance out of thousands of their marvellous power.

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women in ordinary clothes seemed quite strange. The very advertisements on the hoardings were full of interest.

"Lor' bless us," said the little Cockney, "if *Charley's Aunt* ain't still running; but it strikes me people has taken to washin' more, or pretendin' to. I've already seed three advertisements for new soaps as I never heard of afore I come in."

The omnibus had already begun to attract attention. A number of ragged little urchins had begun to keep pace with it; people in the streets turned round and stared after it. Scarsdale turned away his head from the window, a crimson flush of shame on his cheeks. But worse was yet to come. The moment the vehicle drew up in Plymtown Station, a crowd gathered round and pressed so close upon the convicts as they passed in that the warders had to push them back. They were stared at as if they had been wild beasts or freaks of human nature. Audible remarks were passed.

"Look at that one with chains on his legs as well as his wrists. My eye, I shouldn't care to meet him alone in a dark lane at night!"

On the platform it was no better. A hundred eyes were bent upon them. Well-dressed men and fashionable ladies behaved as the rest—all seemed filled with the same prurient curiosity.

To Scarsdale it was all so much horrible humiliation. Never had he felt his degradation so keenly as at that moment. But others of the gang, less sensitive than he, seemed rather to enjoy their notoriety—the little Cockney in particular.

"All right, marm," he said to one old lady, who was glaring at him through a pair of spectacles, "you may come a bit closer; nothink ain't charged for 'aving a look at us, and we don't bite!"

And suddenly rattling his handcuffs, he caused the old lady to take three quick paces to the rear.

Scarsdale's head was bent forward, his eyes fastened on the ground. He could not endure to look around him. But he thanked God that there was no one there who had known him.

A third-class saloon had been reserved for the convict party. The moment the train ran into the station the warders gave the word, and the prisoners, passing between two lines of spectators, entered the carriage. The little Cockney scattered his chaff right and left; the coiner begged one or two of the men for a morsel of "baccy."

The windows of the saloon were open, and the people still crowded round and glared in. Scarsdale prayed for the moment to come for the train to start.

"'Ere," cried the Cockney, "you've had a good stare at us for nothink. Shy in a handful of baccy!"

A man on the platform took a handful of tobacco from his pouch and threw it in through the open window. In an instant all was confusion and uproar. The warders endeavoured to get hold of it; the convicts struggled and fought among themselves for it, in spite of chains and handcuffs, and, when at last order was restored, every vestige of tobacco had disappeared. However, more than one convict's cheeks were bulging out suspiciously, the little Cockney's in particular.

There is always a certain amount of latitude on the occasions of transference of prisoners; and the warders allowed them to enjoy their luxury in peace.

Amongst others who stared in at the window was a clergyman, evidently taking mental notes for the following Sunday's discourse.

"Hullo, Mr. Sky-Pilot," cried the irrepressible Cockney, "don't forgit to put me in the sermon as the bad little boy wot wouldn't do no work and growed up to be a bad man and was sent to quod!"

Scarsdale gave a deep sigh of relief as the train steamed out of the station. Those hard, staring eyes had recalled to him the day when he had stood in the dock of the Old Bailey. He glanced at the old man beside him. Their eyes met.

"As if," he said, in a low, unsteady voice, "our punishment was not great enough without this last humiliation—to be stared at like wild beasts—to be made the subject of jest and scorn. Have men and women no decency?"

The old man lapsed into silence. It was a dreary, monotonous journey, and presently Scarsdale dropped off, in spite the surrounding discomfort, into a doze.

The next thing that he realised was that the train was stopping, and a porter was shouting out:

"Roxeter Junction! Change 'ere for Wrackam!"

Then, after a pause:

"Change 'ere for Gurlston Bay!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Found!

"Good morning, Mr. Penworthy."

"Good morning to you, Miss Mansfield!"

Crump raised his hat, and, breaking off the discussion in which he was engaged with Banks, the gardener, joined Esther. The morning sky was clear, and the heavy rain of the night before had given a peculiar freshness to the air. Banks moved away to another part of the garden.

"I hope," said Crump, "that you avoided getting wet last night, Miss Mansfield. The sad news about that poor woman's escape and the sudden rain-storm cast quite a gloom over yesterday's proceedings!"

"Has anything been heard of her?"

"I'm sorry to say—nothing!"

The little man shook his head sorrowfully. Knowing the woman's tendencies, he dreaded lest something serious had happened.

"And I'm sorry to say," he went on, with a distinct note of annoyance in his voice, "that I have just heard that the policeman who was told off to keep watch by the reservoir was withdrawn after dark. A most unwise act. I wish I had known before."

Esther's dark eyes dilated with a look of horror. Crump saw, and changed the subject. He asked her advice as to the shape and arrangement of a certain flower-bed.

"And now," she said, the question settled, "I want to ask your advice!"

She told him of the invitation to her father and herself to pay a visit to Gurlston Bay, of her father's wish to accept.

"But I feel," she said, in a low voice, "that I oughtn't to go away from here. Yet, for some reasons, I should like to get away for a little time."

"My dear young lady," said Crump, "if I were you, I should certainly go!"

He saw that the strain was telling on her. A change would do her good. Fresh surroundings, fresh faces, would help to distract her thoughts.

"You see, your interests—and his—will be looked after in your absence to the best of my poor ability. I should go. I think you would be the better for getting right away from this immediate atmosphere, if only for a short time. I know—I know how great the strain has been. I know how much almost daily contact with a certain person must have affected you!"

"Then I will go!"

"That's right, quite right. And we—that is, Tom, and that young rascal Freddie, and your humble servant—will be doing our uttermost for you while you are away. And I shall take the liberty of writing to you frequently."

The little man shook his head.

"It's slow work—very slow work; but we must be patient, all of us!"

They moved away to the end of the drive. Esther leant upon the gate.

"Good morning, miss!" said a passing farm-labourer, as he touched his cap. "The balloon come to ground all safe and sound at Ocklington last night, close upon midnight. I've just seed Mr. Revelle. Good morning, miss!"

And the man went on his way.

"Do you think," questioned Esther presently, "that we are—are moving forward?"

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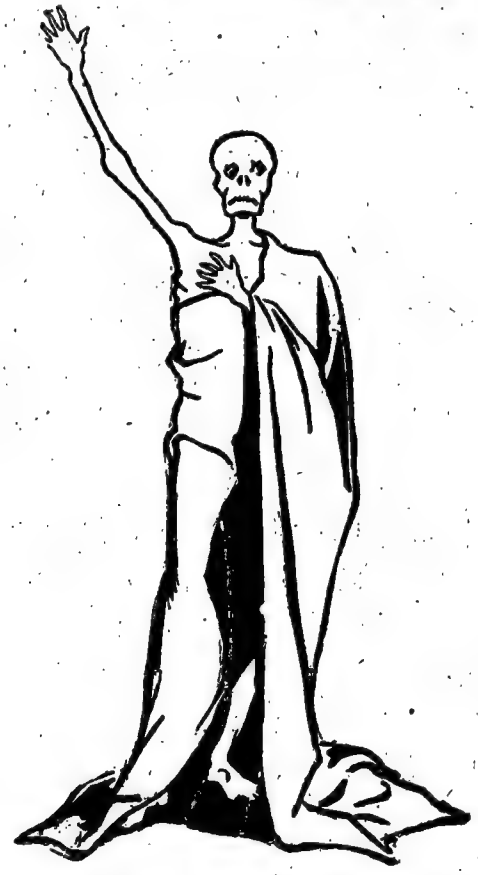

THE BLACK DAY.

The black day is fast approaching—the day which will long remain in the publishing world as a day of mystery—for the Publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's world-renowned work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE," have received instructions from the author to withdraw all cheap editions of his famous book on the last day of this month. The present stock is not over large, and the publishers feel that all SHORT STORIES readers who have not yet secured a copy are entitled to this offer, which will be their last opportunity.

To those readers who are not acquainted with the contents of this world-renowned work, the following list of subjects will give some slight idea of its scope. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the publishers. The complete work, if ordered direct from the publishers on Order Form below, will be forwarded, carriage paid, for **ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE**, the same edition as sold in the ordinary way for Two Shillings.

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"To be quite frank with you, at the present moment we are standing still; but I believe that, sooner or later, we shall be moving on again. I am expecting something to happen. What at present I am not justified in telling you. You see, my dear young lady, unfortunately the rascals who robbed your father's safe, had the start of us. I do not doubt that the diamonds and banknotes were turned into hard cash at once. In spite of the assistance of some very able former colleagues of mine, who helped me for the sake of old times, we have not succeeded in tracing the stolen stuff—as yet. If we could find the man through whom it was disposed, we should soon bring the guilt of the robbery home to the guilty parties; but perhaps we shall——"

He stopped abruptly. He had caught sight of a man, coming from the direction of the reservoir, who was hurrying along the road. A scared look was on his face.

Crump jumped at a conclusion—a terrible one.

"Miss Mansfield," he said quickly, "perhaps you had better go back to the house!"

She looked at him inquiringly.

"I'm afraid something has happened. Please go!"

The man was close up to the gate now.

"The poor woman that escaped from the asylum—she's wearing the dress——"

"Please go!"

Esther, with a shudder, turned and hurried away to the house; but she had guessed.

The panting man had paused for breath. He had turned, and was pointing behind him.

"In the reservoir!"

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Ask and it Shall be Given Thee.

"ETHEL, dear," said Bessie Brown, with proud eyes, "my brother, Philip Estes Brown, from South Africa."

Lieutenant Phil bent over the dainty hand of his sister's chum, mentally contrasting her radiant fairness with the sunburnt faces of the Boer ladies, his principal feminine society for two long years.

"I am pleased to meet you," he said simply. "Bessie has often written of you. I can't express how glad I am to be shaking hands with a genuine English girl again after so many months of desolation."

"And I," said Miss Mackay, with charming seriousness, "am glad to meet one who has given up home and business to uphold his country's flag. My father fought for it in the Crimea. Bessie told me," she continued, when the three had adjourned to the veranda, "that you received your wound in saving one of your men. Would—would you mind telling me about it?"

"There isn't much to tell," said Phil with an embarrassed laugh. "Bessie," with a fond glance at his sister, "has constructed quite a romance out of it, with me for principal character, but it was the other fellow who was the hero."

"We ran into an ambush about a dozen miles from camp—twenty of us, myself, the only officer, in command; and only by the greatest good fortune escaped annihilation, but we managed to reach cover with only half a dozen wounded.

"It was a sort of natural pocket in the rocks, a regular little citadel; but while the enemy couldn't rush us out of it, we couldn't get out either, for we were completely surrounded, and they numbered ten to our one.

"For two days we lay on those broiling rocks, hoping for the help which didn't come, till the heat and the want of water—for that had given out the first day—began to make the men go off their heads, and the suffering of the wounded made my heart ache.

"Things looked so black that I had about made up my mind to give up in the morning of the third day, when one of the men—Rogers his name was, a splendid fellow—came up to me and saluted.

"'Lieutenant,' he said, 'there's water out there about two hundred yards to the left of us. I saw it as we were driven in. I can take half a dozen canteens, and when the moon goes down behind that cloud make a rush. If I get back we can last another day; if I don't—well, it's a man's death, that's all.'

"I wrung his hand impulsively. 'Spoken like a gentleman and a soldier,' I said, for I had long known he was a gentleman, though only a common soldier.

"He reached the water safely, but half-way back the Boers saw him as he crossed a patch of moonlight, and fired; then he fell and lay still, and—and," continued the lieutenant lamely, "I went out and brought him in."

"He brought him in on his back," broke in Bessie, "with two bullets in his own shoulder. And what do you think, Ethel—the man's name wasn't Rogers at all, but Mackay."

Ethel had risen with staring eyes.

"What was he like, this man?" she whispered. "Was he he tall and fair, and did he have a scar across his emple—so?"

"Why, yes," said Phil, wondering at her agitation. "He was just like that—how did you——?"

"He was my brother," she cried. "He left home angry with father. I can't tell you why now; but father was in the wrong He isn't dead—he will get well?"

"Oh, yes," said Phil; "he's all right, and there is a commission waiting for him when he gets out of the hospital."

"I must go at once and tell father," said Ethel hurriedly. "Won't he be glad—and proud! But you," turning suddenly; "what can I say to you, who saved my brother's life?"

"Perhaps," he said, audaciously; "when I come back for always I may ask you for something. May I hope that——?"

A sudden flood of red dyed the girl's pure face.

"Ask, and it shall be given thee," she quoted softly.

J. P.

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By MADGE MORRIS.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Would it be Etiquette?

"FIVE O'CLOCK" is at home two days during the month, and generally has a good many callers. She asks my advice as to how to tactfully get out of the following predicament: She is engaged in a very interesting conversation with one guest, when a fresh caller is announced. Should she leave off the conversation and devote herself to the new caller? While this would be strict etiquette, would it not be rather hard on the person with whom she was talking, to suddenly leave her?

❦❦❦

I think a little tact would soon put the matter right. On the new guest arriving, "FIVE O'CLOCK" should exchange a few well-chosen remarks, nice and to the point, should see that tea was given her, and, if possible, that she was left talking to some other guest, and then return, with an apology, to the guest with whom she was talking. To leave the latter for any length of time would be in bad taste, though only too many hostesses offend in this particular, out of supposed adherence to etiquette.

❦❦❦

Won't Raise His Hat

"RABY" is in sad trouble. She recently met "WALTER," to whom she took a great fancy. This she told her friends. Now, "WALTER," though a very nice boy, has the very slightest knowledge of good manners. Whenever "RABY" meets him she bows very nicely, but "WALTER" never raises his hat. This has gone on for such a long time that "RABY" asks my advice as to how to convey to "WALTER" his proper duty when meeting a lady.

❦❦❦

Let "RABY" go out with her brother, or cousin, or male friend, and when next they meet "WALTER," and she recognises him, let her request her escort to raise his hat in a very conspicuous way. If "WALTER" does not see from example what is the proper thing to do, then he must be lacking in intelligence as well as knowledge of good breeding, and would scarcely be a nice man for "RABY" to wish to cultivate.

❦❦❦

The Too-Dignified Barmaid.

MY correspondents include a great many different kinds of people, and this week I have to solve a little problem for "BELLA," who is a barmaid in Tooting. Now "BELLA" believes she is a pretty and attractive girl, but finds that three years have passed away and she has never found a young man to be attentive to her. She says she has always behaved in a very dignified way at the bar and never been familiar with anyone. On the contrary, she has always maintained the bearing of a lady, and kept obtrusive people at proper length.

❦❦❦

Well, "BELLA," has it occurred to you that you have carried that idea of being a lady rather too far, and that this is the reason for your non-success with the men? There is no need for a girl in your position to be familiar with your customers, but a nice charming manner towards everyone would do you no harm at all, and would be just as lady-like as "aloofness." After all, your position makes it necessary for you to serve men. Why not do it gracefully and agreeably? Try it for a time, and if someone does not start paying attentions to you I shall be very surprised.

❦❦❦

A Matter of Dress.

"LUCINDA" dresses very smartly, but her husband goes about attired like a labourer, whereas he is a man in a good position. How can "LUCINDA" induce her husband to dress in a becoming manner, as her own social position is handicapped by his appearance. Whenever she broaches the matter to him, he replies that he cannot afford to spend money on clothes, a statement which, "LUCINDA" assures me, is untrue.

❦❦❦

I know a woman who cured a similar tendency on the part of her husband in the following way: She took a suit of his clothes to a tailor and told him to make another to the same measurements, of a superior pattern. When her husband arrived home one evening, he was confronted with his new suit. After roaring about the expense for some time, his wife said she was very sorry, but was quite willing to pay it out of her own allowance if he wished it, rather than see him continue so shabby. He tried on the clothes, which fitted him well, and went out with his wife, who kept up a running fire of compliments on his appearance the whole way. This so pleased him that from that moment he begun to take an interest in his appearance, and soon a good many more suits came from that tailor. "LUCINDA" might try the same scheme.

❦❦❦

Wants a Wife.

"WESTRALIAN" is sixty-six years of age, and wishes to know if he is too old to marry. He is well off, and wants a wife not too old. In his own words the nice girls ("those up to forty") are soon picked up by younger men. "WESTRALIAN" has no infirmities.

❦❦❦

Of course in the Colony in which my correspondent resides, he may find a dearth of promising widows or spinsters of from forty upwards. I do not know the conditions out there. But I do not think he would find any difficulty if he went the proper way to work. Of course, even a widow of forty-five might rather shrink from the idea of marrying a man of sixty-six, but let "WESTRALIAN" just propose to a few of them, and if, in face of the actual proposal, somebody does not (after the usual correct remark about its being sudden, etc), consent, I shall be surprised. I know several charming ladies of mature age who would be only too willing to marry such a man as "WESTRALIAN," and if that is so here, perhaps it is the same in the Colonies.

❦❦❦

The Literary Prodigy.

I DO not wish to discourage you, "ISABEL," from writing stories, but you are only fifteen, and therefore cannot yet have the experience of life and manners necessary to publish fiction. At present you should seek the criticism of well-read friends, and abide by their opinion. There are so many professional story-writers whose experience covers years that the path of so youthful an aspirant as yourself would be full of disappointments.

❦❦❦

In any case, you should spend your time during the next few years in closely observing life and character and keeping your imagination constantly at work in trying to discover new and interesting situations. Do not be in too great a hurry. If you start actually writing four years hence you will be in ample time, as experience in quite as necessary in a writer as talent.

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